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NAGARJUNA

K. SATCHIDANANDA MURTY

NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA

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PART ONE

I PROLEGOMENARY

NAGARJUNA is one of the greatest philosophers the world has so far known. In metaphysical profundity, logical acumen and spiritual insight, he has few equals among Indian thinkers, barring perhaps Sankara. In the Eastern world he exerted a historical influence of such vastness and depth that it can only be said to have been surpassed by that of the Buddha. Nagarjuna's influence could be compared with that of Jesus Christ and St. Paul in the West or that of the prophet Mohammad in West Asia. Devout Buddhists of China, Japan and Tibet, in fact, actually did consider him to be the second Buddha who had once again set in motion the wheel of Dharma (truth and righteousness). Between 100 B.C. and 100 A.D. there was a kind of renaissance of Buddhism—certain old and basic ideas were reaffirmed, others reinterpreted, clarified and amplified. Some new concepts were evolved, and the techniques of meditation and forms of worship and, consequently, a way of life in consonance were originated and developed. These, in course of time, were disseminated all over India and Central Asia, China, Korea, Japan and Tibet. They became an element of the existence of the peoples of those lands. Adherents of this new pattern of religious beliefs and practices called it Mahayana (the Great Path or the Great Vehicle). Mahayana was a kind of reconstruction, a new creative synthesis, of the Buddha's teachings. In the integration

of Mahayana and in providing it with a philosophical basis, Nagarjuna played so important a role that its scriptures like the *Lankavatara Sutra* spoke of him as "the glorious and greatly renowned monk who expounded in this world Buddha's teaching as that of the Great Path, higher than which there is none". He became its "putative father", the would-be Buddha (bodhisattva) who for the salvation of all, it is said, brought it out from within the Buddhist Order (sangha) to the external world. A contemporary scholar, Hanayama Shinsho, described Nagarjuna as "the progenitor of Mahayana thought". Nagarjuna's figure assumed, according to H. Kern in the *Channel of Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, a double character in that his name was not only that of the first eminent leader of a philosophical school, but also became simply a comprehensive name of the activity of Mahayana in the first phase of its onward course. Sir Charles Eliot writing in *Hinduism and Buddhism* (London) would appear to concur with him when he wrote that Nagarjuna represented a movement and a school as much as a personality.

A substantial volume of his authentic writings is available and we can know something of his thought by making a careful study of it. There are many more works attributed to him, but some, in the light of philological and historical evidence, could definitely be termed as spurious. But it is almost impossible to form a satisfactory picture of him, because his figure was also obviously overlaid by many legends and myths, many of which had nothing to dow ith him. When we try to arrive at the reality by eliminating obviously legendary material, or by basing it on facts which are clearly

of a later date, very little remains. If we are looking for authentic biographical data, we can find none, for no reliable historical account of him is extant. Consequently, it has even become possible to doubt his very existence. "Nagarjuna," wrote M. Walleser in *The Life of Nagarjuna from Tibetan and Chinese Sources*, "is the name of a man of whom we cannot even positively say that he has really existed, still less that he is the author of the works ascribed to him." But it would be absurd to conclude that he did not exist, because his writings, the extraordinary impact he made on the development of Buddhism and religious thought in the East and the images of him formed by generations of Asians and recorded by some of the best minds, constitute his historical reality.

By separating the overlapping traditions about him, by clearing up the genuine confusion as also the deliberate merging of his personality with that of others of different times and places, and by lifting the veils of myth and legend which obscure his figure even in the relevant and more reliable accounts, we can arrive at a minimum relative certainty, or at least a reasonable probability regarding Nagarjuna. Then again, by being receptive, we can let an image of him form within us—an image similar to that which an Aryadeva or a Kumarajiva, a Chi-tsang or a Chandrakirti, a Bu-ston or a Tson-kha-pa had of him. A combination of such a vision, with the help of a critical analysis of the traditions, is likely to give us a somewhat satisfactory picture of him; it will also help to explain why he exerted such an immense influence. By thus putting ourselves in a position of contemporaneity with him through facing his historical

reality, he would become relevant and meaningful to us. Besides, since Nagarjuna tackled fundamental questions of human existence, human aspiration and the human task, found solutions to them through reflective thought as well as through intuition developed by ethical living and meditation, guided by the Buddha's teaching, and put into practice those solutions, and as his doctrine and experience became a satisfying norm to some of the most rational and sensitive minds of different generations in different countries and cultures, an understanding of them would clarify to us our own situation; it would also suggest possible solutions to fundamental problems. This is the path by following which, like any other great thinker—Plato or Pascal, Augustine or Aquinas, Sankara or Ramanuja—who deeply pondered on fundamental problems, we can gain some sense of direction for finding our own solutions.

II NAGARJUNA–SANKARA : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

IT IS interesting that two of our greatest philosophers present the same methodological situation for a historical inquiry concerning them. According to some Tibetan accounts, Nagarjuna was born in 482 B.C. and, according to some Chinese accounts, in 212 B.C., while according to a Mahayana scripture he was born 1200 years after the death of the Buddha. Ranging within this period, nearly a score of sources have suggested as many different dates. According to one tradition, he lived for sixty years; according to another, for six hundred years; and yet another maintains that he is still alive ! Within these extremes, various life-spans have been assigned to him. Only one inscription of an uncertain date refers to him. Coming to our other philosopher, Sankara, the traditions of the Dwaraka, Puri and Kanchi Maths put him as having lived between 509 and 477 B.C., while according to some other traditions, it was in 44 B.C., or 400 A.D. Evidence furnished by other accounts and by a Cambodian inscription of the 9th century show his dates to be 788-820 A.D., whereas some other sources and facts indicate that he lived from 684 or 688 to 716 or 720 A.D. Accounts also differ regarding the length of his life-span—32, 38 or 85 years. In the latter two cases the dates would change. Sources are far from unanimous about where Nagarjuna or Sankara was born, and where the latter died. Places in Tamil Nadu, Vidarbha, Videha and Western India, and some other unidentifi-

able places have been honoured with having been mentioned as Nagarjuna's birth-places, and Kaladi, Sasala and Chidambaram have been mentioned in connection with Sankara's place of birth. Sources are, however, almost unanimous about where Nagarjuna died, while Sankara's death has variously been described as having occurred in Kanchipuram, Kailas or Kerala. Some Mahayana scriptures, literary works and the so-called histories and biographies have given accounts of Nagarjuna's life just as in the case of Sankara some Puranas like *Sivarahasya*, many biographies called *Vijayas* or *Digvijayas* or *Charitas* and *guruparamparas* (succession lists of gurus) claim to provide the history of his life. In the case of neither of the two philosophers any two sources about their lives are wholly in accord on any point; they are often mutually contradictory.

Twenty-four works have been ascribed to Nagarjuna by a Chinese source and six main works by a Tibetan source. It has also been stated that he wrote numerous tracts and tantric works, and he is also supposed to have written hymns and treatises on magic, medicine, sex, metallurgy, chemistry and alchemy. Similarly, over 250 works are ascribed to Sankara which include innumerable prayers, hymns, tracts and commentaries on tantric works or independent tantric works *(Saundarya Lahari, Prapanca Sara, Lalita Trissati Bhashya* and *Nrusimhatapaniya Bhashya)*. According to tradition, Nagarjuna practised Mahamayurividya and Sankara Srividya. Both were yogins with miraculous powers and both had many temples renovated. Nagarjuna introduced, or encouraged, worship of deities or powers like Kurukulla and Ekajata. Sankara introduced the Pancayatana puja

(worship of five deities), and established, or encouraged, Vaishnava, Kapalika and other sects. Both are reputed to have conceived the Absolute as a Personality and worshipped it. If Nagarjuna was one of the 84 Siddhas, Sankara was the 71st teacher of Srividya, and he had 14 disciples. Sankara's teacher, Govinda Bhagavatpadacarya, himself was believed to be a Siddha and an alchemist. The well-known "biography" of Sankara by Madhava makes him a contemporary of many luminaries from Bana (7th century) and Dandi (c700 A.D.) to Udayana (10th century), Abhinavagupta (950-1000 A.D.) and Sri Harsha (second half of the 12th century), all of whom he is reputed to have confronted and defeated in debate. In the same way, some accounts of Nagarjuna's life make him the person who inspired the construction of the railing round Amaravati stupa (prior to 3rd century A.D.), a student, and later, verger of the monastic congregation of the Nalanda University, founded probably in 425 A.D., but certainly not earlier than 415-416 A.D., and a contemporary of scholars in Vikramasila University established by the Pala king, Dharmapala (770-810 A.D.). To accomplish all this he must have lived for not less than 600 years. If we keep in mind these parallelisms relating to the lives and works of these two symbolic figures and culture heroes, we can grasp and handle the relevant material better.

Historical scholarship and textual criticism have helped in dispelling much of the confusion regarding Sankara and have settled with relative certainty his milieu and epoch. Consequently, it has been possible to identify his authentic works and edit and publish his complete works at least twice; *all* his authentic works

have been translated many times over into European and Indian languages and many monographs on his philosophy have been published. About six of his traditional biographies have also been published. Work of a comparable magnitude has not been done in the case of Nagarjuna: no edition of his *Complete Works* has been brought out, nor are they easily accessible, and even his *magnum opus* has only recently been translated in full into English. One possible reason for this may be that the material concerning him is in Chinese, Tibetan and Sanskrit, and that some of his works have been lost in the original and only preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations. Some of the latter are in different recensions. Apart from that, Indian interest in Buddhist studies has been neither deep nor widespread, while perhaps European interest in Mahayana—especially Madhyamika philosophy—has not been as great, and as sustained as that in Advaita Vedanta or early Buddhism. Nevertheless, it is possible to remove some of the confusion which still prevails about Nagarjuna's life and to summarise his teaching. This book is an attempt to do so. However, in such an attempt, the following will have to be taken as the guiding principles:

(*a*) If Indian, Chinese and Tibetan sources are unanimous on any point in his teaching or concerning any event in his life, they may be taken as correct or as historical facts.

(*b*) If any book ascribed to him exists in the original Sanskrit, and if its early translation in at least one Asian language confirms the text and important commentaries on it exist, it should be accepted as his work.

(*c*) If the original of any work is lost, but its translations in Chinese and Tibetan more or less agree with each other, it is, in all probability, his work.

(*d*) If a work is preserved only in Sanskrit either in fragments or in full, and if quotations from it are found in authoritative commentaries on his other works, it is more or less certain that it is his work.

(*e*) Any work which is in glaring contradiction to what is found in the first type of works cannot be his.

(*f*) Works claiming to be his, which are available only in one of the three languages—Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan—but are not referred to or quoted by important early expounders of his thought or commentators on his authentic works, are certainly not his.

(*g*) Any early work attributed to him that is available only in Sanskrit or only in Chinese or Tibetan, but which does not contradict the first type of works, could be his.

(*h*) Even if other conditions are fulfilled, which is unlikely, if a work attributed to him refers to, or deals with, doctrines and events subsequent to his period, it is either wholly spurious or additions were made to the material which might have been his.

(*i*) With regard to accounts of his life, only the earlier and the less legendary ones have to be taken as correct.

(*j*) The earlier, more simple and more credibly factual account is likely to be more reliable.

(*k*) Accounts which relate him to persons and events

of the periods which were earlier or later than the period to which he very probably belonged must be considered as apocryphal.

(*l*) The miraculous may be set aside as legendary or mythical—though perhaps symbolically true.

(*m*) If two or more later accounts agree in relating him to persons or events of the period to which in all likelihood he belonged—although such accounts may also contain legendary or apocryphal elements which can be discarded—it is likely that they are transmitting to that extent a correct tradition which can be accepted.

(*n*) The accounts in traditions regarding him in two or more cultures, which are directly or circumstantially corroborated by epigraphic or literary evidence, are very likely to be factual.

Lastly, we must remember that so far as figures of antiquity or late antiquity are concerned, especially those of the East, historical research and textual criticism can never arrive at absolute certainty. This is much more so in the case of the Indians. All the statements about Nagarjuna's life that follow are made on the basis of these methodological principles, but since a fresh study such as this is not a technical work for scholars alone, evidence in detail is not cited or documented and discussed.

III THE NAGARJUNA EPOCH

ALTHOUGH, in the words of Zenryu Tsukamoto, Nagarjuna was "the first and greatest organiser of Mahayana doctrine", it is certain he was not the founder of Mahayana. On this point all the sources agree. Mahayana scriptures are in Sanskrit, and many of them are Sanskrit versions of works in original Prakrit and other dialects. While Sanskrit Buddhist works did not appear prior to the period of Menander and Patanjali (150 B.C.), none of them which is extant need date before the 1st century A.D. Some of the Prajnaparamita Sutras were among the earliest Mahayana scriptures. After a thorough textual analysis, E. Conze has arrived at the conclusion that a basic text of this class of literature was elaborated from circa 100 B.C. to 100 A.D. The oldest of these Sutras is the *Ashtasahasrika*. Its composition took over two centuries, and the text as it is today was constituted by about 150 A.D., again according to E. Conze. It was translated into Chinese by Lokakshema, an Indo-Scythian, in 179-80 A.D. Of the other types of Mahayana scriptures, one of the earliest was the *Greater Sukhavati Vyuha*, first translated into Chinese between 147 and 186 A.D. It teaches that faith in Amitabha Buddha leads to salvation. This text must have been finalised at least two or three decades before its translation into Chinese. The ideas contained in it do not belong to a much earlier period. The oldest and best Indian and Chinese commentators considered Nagarjuna's philosophy to be a systematisation of

Prajnaparamita doctrines, and reliable accounts of his life and the authorities on the Amitabha cult as also one of his epistles testify to the fact that he was an Amitabha worshipper. So his time must have been prior to that of the development of Prajnaparamita and the rise of the Amitabha cult, i.e., definitely after 100 A.D., and perhaps not even during the earlier decades of the 2nd century.

All the sources—Indian, Chinese and Tibetan—agree that one of the great Satavahana kings was a friend of Nagarjuna, and that the latter wrote epistles to that king, and that both died about the same time. In view of what has been stated in the previous paragraph, Satavahanas prior to 100 A.D. are not relevant in this connection. And the rule of this dynasty ended in 218 A.D. So Nagarjuna was a contemporary of the kings who ruled between 100 and 218 A.D. The *Manjusrimula-kalpa* and all Tibetan sources assert that Nagarjuna was responsible for the Amaravati stupa being renovated, enclosed and ornamented. This stupa has been completely reconstructed between 150 and 200 A.D. So Nagarjuna may be assumed to have been active and influential during the whole, or at least a part, of this period, and in either case he perhaps lived for some years or decades before or after that. Further, in a site opposite the Mahachaitya on Sriparvata, a hoard of Satavahana coins has been discovered. This and other evidence shows that this area was a part of the Satavahana empire and it can be believed that the Mahachaitya there existed in the Satavahana times. This probably was the monastery which, according to Hsuan-tsang, was built on the mountain Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li by King Satavahana for Nagarjuna. In later years, he also lived in it. There is

epigraphic evidence that the Mahachaitya on Sriparvata was either renovated or founded in the reign of the Ikshvaku king, Siri Virapurisadata (235-255 or 240-265 A.D.). If it was renovated, it could have been the Satavahana monastery Hsuan-tsang wrote about and, unless it was at least fifty or sixty years old, it would not have needed renovation. This points to Yajna Sri or an earlier Satavahana being the king who built the monastery on Sriparvata. On the other hand, if the Ikshvakus themselves built a new Mahachaitya, it could have been in addition to the Satavahana monastery.

Between 150 and 200 A.D., there was a succession of four Satavahana kings: Siva Sri (150-7), Catarapana Satakarni (157-67), Sivaskanda (167-74) and Yajna Sri (174-203). Any one of these, or Satakarni (130-50) the predecessor of Siva Sri, or one of the three last kings who succeeded Yajna Sri, could have been Nagarjuna's friend to whom epistles were addressed. The last three kings were: Vijaya (203-9), Chandra Sri (209-11) and Pulomavi III (211-18). If it was a great king who was Nagarjuna's friend, it could have been Satakarni, Lord of all the South (Dakshinapathapati) who married Rudradaman's daughter, or Yajna Sri, one of the most prominent Satavahana monarchs.

It is odd that there should be no archaeological evidence for Nagarjuna's association with any Satavahana king, or his direction of Amaravati renovation, or the construction of a monastery for him on Sriparvata, or for Amitabha worship in this area. Nor is Prajnaparamita, Mahayana, or Nagarjuna's philosophical school (Madhyamika) mentioned in any of the Amaravati or Sriparvata inscriptions. The absence of epigraphic evidence does

not, of course, disprove the available literary and circumstantial evidence. It may be recalled that there is no contemporary epigraphical evidence for the establishment of the four famous maths or for the renovation of Kanchi by Sankara. The Mahachaitya at Amaravati, according to inscriptions, belonged to "Chetiyakiyas", whereas the one on Sriparvata was that of "Aparamahavinaseliyas". These, one may say, were Proto-Mahayana sects, or Sthavira Mahayana (original Mahayana).

There is, however, one solitary epigraph which mentions Nagarjuna. About 30 miles north-west from Amaravati, on the Paler river, a tributary of the river Krishna, and 4 miles from their junction, is Jaggayyapeta (Betavolu) known in ancient times as Vellagiri, where once there used to be a great stupa. Excavations there have yielded a number of Prakrit inscriptions of king Siri Virapurisadata, and one Sanskrit inscription which is incised below the feet of an image of the standing Buddha in high relief in a panel. This inscription records that one Chandraprabha had the image installed for the attainment of Buddhahood (Buddhatva), and that he was a disciple of Jayaprabhacharya, who in turn was a disciple of Bhadanta Nagarjunacharya. Burgess, who discovered it, thought it was "in an alphabet of about 600 A.D.", while T. N. Ramachandran has held that the script was "Brahmi of about 450-500 A.D." Some scholars have conjectured that the Nagarjuna referred to here was "the tantric Nagarjuna", a disciple of Saraha. If so, he must have lived, say, about 550 A.D. or 400 A.D. That would appear to be impossible because: (i) the tantric Nagarjuna, even if he were a historical reality (vide infra), cannot be assigned such an early date; (ii) the

names of Jayaprabha and Chandraprabha are not found in the lists of tantrics relating to Saraha; (iii) only men like Asvaghosha and Nagarjuna, and not tantric siddhas, were styled 'Bhadanta'; and (iv) the spirit of the deed commemorated as also the image itself are pure Mahayanic. The principle of parsimony obliges us not to postulate more than one Nagarjuna during that period, as there is no positive evidence that there were two Nagarjunas by then, and as available data can also be explained without a duplication of Nagarjuna. There is no certainty that the epigraph was not inscribed in 300 or 350 A.D., or that Jayaprabha was an immediate disciple of Nagarjuna. Like the solitary Cambodian epigraph about Sankara inscribed at the instance of Sivasoma, guru of the king of Champa, in 877-889 A.D., which claims he studied under Bhagavat Sankara, this could refer to Nagarjuna. In any case, it gives us no new important fact nor does it prove, as some fondly believe, that Nagarjuna lived in Jaggayyapeta or in Andhra, just as the Cambodian epigraph does not establish that Sankara went to Cambodia. As Jayaprabha and Chandraprabha are not known from any other source, this record does not even help us to determine Nagarjuna's date. It should, however, dissolve scepticism about his historicity.

The period suggested above for Nagarjuna can be termed as being relatively certain in the light of other evidence. There is hardly any reasonable doubt about Aryadeva being the principal and direct disciple of Nagarjuna. If it is true that a Ceylonese chronicle refers to him as a contemporary of king Voharaka Tissa, he must have lived at the beginning of the 3rd

century. So must have his teacher. Since "Maitreya" and Asanga of about 350 A.D. have commented on Nagarjuna's works, the works must have acquired authority by then. Kumarajiva translated Nagarjuna's *magnum opus* and another of his works into Chinese in 409 A.D., and *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra*, which could be Nagarjuna's work, in 405 A.D. He is also responsible for Nagarjuna's biography in Chinese. His immediate disciples, Seng-jui and Seng-chao, both important scholars, and Hui-yuan, a contemporary scholar who was in correspondence with him, have stated that Nagarjuna and Aryadeva flourished in the 9th century after the Buddha's Nirvana. In view of the date which they take as that of the Buddha's Nirvana, this works out to be the first half of the third century A.D. Long ago, E. J. Eitel, an early Sinologist, gave 194 A.D. as one of the two alternative dates found in Chinese material for Nagarjuna, and J. Edkins has recorded that, according to the Chinese, the birthday of Nagarjuna is the 25th day of the 7th lunar month of their national almanac.

Based on a Chinese author Tao-an (568 A.D.), Kumarajiva's account and his date for the Buddha's Nirvana and other material, a Japanese scholar Hakaju Ui concluded that Nagarjuna lived about 113-213 A.D. and Aryadeva about 163-263 A.D. Another Japanese scholar, Hikata Ryusho, on the basis of Kumarajiva's biography of Nagarjuna, one of Nagarjuna's epistles, and what Dharmaraksha (266-313 A.D.), an early translator of Mahayana scriptures, has mentioned, concluded that "Nagarjuna was a man living from the latter half of the second century to the first half of the third century."

We shall now consider the evidence which may

possibly conflict with what has been stated above. I-tsing, who came to India in 673 A.D., and lived for ten years in Nalanda and also visited other places, mentions that Nagarjuna was a contemporary of Kanishka. Lama Taranatha says he was born in Kanishka's time. This could not have been the great Kanishka who ruled from 78 to 101 A.D., as these dates are too early for Nagarjuna in view of what has been said above. It may also be noted in passing that archaeology shows that Kanishka was a patron of Sarvastivada and not of Mahayana. As Sylvain Levi has noted, Nagarjuna's "intimate friendship" with a Satavahana king has been confirmed by many witnesses; as he puts it, positive connections united them. That was not so in Kanishka's case. Still, for the Buddhist tradition, Kanishka possessed a strong force of attraction; so, according to Levi, the great doctor of the Church was brought close to him. While this may be so, there could have been a genuine confusion, as there were two other Kanishkas—Kanishka II who ruled for a while, about 119, and Kanishka III who ruled from 176 to 210; both of them also belonged to the same Yueh-chi dynasty. According to Kalhana, Nagarjuna was a contemporary of the kings Vasishka, Huvishka and Kanishka, which means Nagarjuna was living round about 119, for Kanishka II was a rival of Huviskha, who in turn succeeded Vasishka, the immediate successor of Kanishka I. It is probable that Nagarjuna was a contemporary of Kanishka III, but unlikely that he synchronised with Kanishka II, in view of what has been said above. Nor did Nagarjuna synchronise with the famous poet Asvaghosha, who perhaps was the great Kanishka's contemporary. No reliable source maintains that Nagarjuna was

Asvaghosha's contemporary, or that he was the latter's direct disciple. Hsuan-tsang only said that in the times of Kumaralabdha who was the founder of the Sautrantika school of Buddhism, Asvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Kumaralabdha were "the four suns who illumined the world"; he did not say they were contemporaries. Beal, a translator of Hsuan-tsang, wrote that while Asvaghosha could have been Kanishka's contemporary, Nagarjuna was certainly subsequent to Kanishka's time and lived towards the end of the 2nd century A.D. According to Chinese sources, not less than a century separated Nagarjuna from Asvaghosha. Besides, there were perhaps six Asvaghoshas; and the one who wrote the *Mahayana Sraddhotpada Sastra*, a philosophic classic, was not the poet but one who belonged to the late fourth century A.D., as it was translated into Chinese in 405 A.D., and as it synthesises Madhyamika and Vijnanavada.

There is a late Prakrit work *Lilavati Parinaya* by Kutuhala, which narrates the marriage of the Satavahana king Hala with Lilavati, a Simhala princess. It says that Bhikshu Nagarjuna was Hala's teacher and adviser. The oldest North Indian manuscript of *Lilavati Parinaya* is of 1208 A.D., and it may have been composed one or two centuries earlier at the most. As Hala ruled from 19 to 24 A.D., and as this date is much too early for Nagarjuna, what it says about his being the teacher of that king has to be dismissed as pure fiction. It is not possible for Nagarjuna to have preceded Kanishka and Asvaghosha by more than half a century.

Some scholars thought that Gautamiputra Satakarni, the Satavahana emperor of whom an inscription says he completely destroyed the "Kshaharatavamsa" [the

dynasty of Scythians who ruled certain parts of India for a time under the name of Kshatrapas (Kshaharatas)], was the king to whom Nagarjuna addressed his epistle *Ratnavali*. On the basis of its content, it has been argued that it was written to a ruler who was antagonistic to Buddhism, one who had reverted to Brahmanism, having abandoned Buddhism, the faith of his fathers. This is not so, for there is no internal evidence to prove that it was written to one who hated Buddhism. According to its commentator Ajitamitra, it was written to the same king to whom the other epistle *Suhrllekha* had also been written. According to unanimous tradition, the king to whom they were written was an intimate life-long friend of Nagarjuna. One of the epistles is strictly impersonal, as Levi noted; though addressed to a king, both were summaries of doctrine and ethics intended for all. Noting that ignorant men abuse Mahayana because they are bewildered by its profundity and its catholicity, the *Ratnavali* advises that those who seek their own welfare should not hate Mahayana but must understand impartially what the Buddha taught. Elsewhere it says that all religious practices established by former kings may be continued. From this it does not follow that the king hated Mahayana and was obstructing the practice of either personal or communal worship of any sort. When a religious preceptor admonishes anyone against evil and exhorts one to do good, it does not mean that one was wallowing in sin; or when a father writes to his son to be regular in the discharge of his duties, avoid bad company and stick to the right path, it does not mean that the son had gone astray or had fallen. Anyway, even the *Ratnavali* was not entirely a personal letter to the

king but a discourse (*parikatha*) meant for all. History also does not inform us that Gautamiputra Satakarni's father and forefathers were Buddhists and that he was the first to become Brahmanical. He might have called himself, or was called by his relatives and admirers, "the sole Brahmin" and "the one who removed or ended the confusion of the four castes (vinivarta chaturvarnasankara)". We do not know what precisely was meant by that, especially when his own son king Satakarni (130-154 A.D.) married a Scythian!

It may be recalled that Nagarjuna too was a Brahmin and that lay Buddhists did not give up caste. Only in the monkish order was there equality. Moreover, Gautamiputra was a patron of Buddhism, though his personal faith might have been Hinduism. His Nasik inscription mentions his gifts to Buddhist monks—to "pavajitana Tekirasina vitarama" and to "pavajitana bhikhina" on Tiranhu mountains. His mother's gifts to Buddhist monks of "Bhadayaniyinam" sect and his son king Pulomavi II's (102-130 A.D.) gifts to Buddhist monks of Mahasanghika sect (Karla ins.) and "Dhanakata sramanas" (Nasik ins.) are attested to by epigraphs. Thus Gautamiputra's whole family revered Buddhist monks. No Satavahana seems to have been intolerant of any religion, much less fanatical. On the contrary, according to a Buddhist tradition, when holy law (saddharma) declined, a Satavahana king propagated Mahayana and its scriptures and thus protected the holy law. The contents of Nagarjuna's epistles do not furnish any evidence as to which king they were addressed to. Finally, in view of Gautamiputra's date (78-102 A.D.), his synchronisation with Nagarjuna is not possible, for the latter came,

as already stated, long after Kanishka I and Asvaghosha, and as he and his royal friend—whoever he was—died almost at the same time, he could not possibly have inspired the renovation of Amaravati if he happened to be a friend of any king before 150 A.D.

Much time need not be spent on the Nagarjuna-Vatsyayana problem. Pakshilasvami Vatsyayana, who wrote the bhashya on the *Nyaya Sutra*, quite plausibly, belonged to the fourth century or maybe somewhat earlier. He is different from Mallanaga Vatsyayana who wrote the *Kama Sutra*, for which 500 A.D. would a reasonable date. Almost all leading orientalists are unanimous that the two Vatsyayanas came much after Nagarjuna. If it can be confirmed that a commentary supposed to have been by Nagarjuna on *Vigraha-vyavartani*, one of his own logical works, refers to and criticizes any views expressed only in the Nyaya bhashya for the first time, and not in any earlier work, it would only prove that such passages were later additions or that the commentary was not really by Nagarjuna, as is the case with another commentary attributed to him—the one on *Dvadasamukha Sastra*, also one of his own works. Gotama, the writer of the *Nyaya Sutra*, and Nagarjuna also refer to each other's ideas, from which it only follows, as Stcherbatsky has observed, "that the Naiyayika and Madhyamika schools are evidently much older than Gotama and Nagarjuna".

IV NAGARJUNA AND TANTRA

TANTRA IS enlightening knowledge and liberating action. It is a body of esoteric doctrines and a religious technology based on them. In some forms of it—which may not be its highest—human behaviour is sought to be reversed, or simplified and naturalised, and sex sublimated or expressed in ways which most men consider to be peculiar. In some other forms of it, there is a coincidence of archaic religion and magic, with advanced philosophical thinking, and bodily and mental discipline of a high order. G. Tucci, one of the foremost scholars in Indian and Tibetan studies, speaks of tantra as "one of the highest expressions of Indian mysticism". M. Eliade, a leading authority on comparative religion, describes it as an "imposing spiritual synthesis" and "a great philosophical and religious movement". Indian and Tibetan traditions speak of Nagarjuna as a tantric and, according to early Chinese accounts, he was a mystic of high attainments. Some modern scholars consider it to be incongruous that such a great philosopher and dialectician should have been a tantric. This is sheer prejudice. Men like Ramanuja, Abhinavagupta and Appayya Dikshita—all second to none in their intellectual attainments and the quality of their ethical living—followed Vaishnava (Pancharatra) and Saiva tantras, and maybe Sankara himself was to some extent an adherent of aspects of Sakta tantra (Devi worship and Sri Vidya). In modern times Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Sri Aurobindo for some time practised tantra. Many Buddhist philo-

sophers like Santarakshita and Kamalasila and men such as Atisa Dipankarasrijnana and Abhayakaragupta, who headed monastic universities like Nalanda and Vikramasila, were tantrics. There is nothing contradictory in a great philosopher also being a yogi, tantric or bhakta. So, while his being a great philosopher could not have prevented Nagarjuna from being a tantric, the question is—was he one ? The history of tantra gives a negative answer.

Tantra contains some very ancient elements of belief and practice, but it did not emerge as a distinctive trend much before the 4th century A.D. A foreshadowing of tantra, however, may be traced to an earlier period. So far as Buddhism is concerned, one of its sects, the Vaitulyakas (or Vetulyakas), may have been the earliest one to combine ascetic, esoteric and erotic elements. This sect is mentioned in the *Kathavatthu* of the 1st century B.C. It maintained that the Buddha never dwelt on earth, that he is always in the Tushita heaven, and that what appeared in the world was only an apparition of him. It also appears to have believed that, after worshipping the Buddha along with a woman, out of compassion (ekadhipraya), a monk may enter into sexual relation with her and decide to live with her. There is no evidence whether the latter is an integral part of Vaitulyaka doctrine, or only a belief held by some of them who deviated. A group of Vaitulyakas appears to have existed in the Abhayagiri monastery in Ceylon from the 3rd century to the 12th century A.D., until they were finally suppressed and, as a result, disappeared. We also find mention of another Buddhist sect, the Vajiras, who had some esoteric conceptions and practices. But all

this is not enough to say that tantra existed in the 2nd century A.D. or prior to that. Though 'Vidyas' (mystic doctrines) and erotic and esoteric material are found in the Upanishads, and mother-goddess worship and asceticism are as old as Mohenjo-daro culture, we cannot conclude that Tantra and Yoga are equally ancient. We have monistic passages in the *Rig Veda*, yet we do not infer Advaita Vedanta to be as old as that; and though the essence of Mahayana is found in the Buddha's teaching, we do not say it existed from his time. An anticipation of tantra cannot be termed as tantra.

The first clear evidence of the appearance of tantra in Buddhism is found in Asanga's (c. 350 A.D.) works, *Mahayanasutralankara* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. In the first, he speaks of the reversal (paravrtti) of mental modes (vrtti) and sex (maithuna), and the Vibhutva (sovereign power) to be gained thereby and, in the second, of the ascertainment of esoteric import (abhisandhivinischaya). Of the second he gives an example : brahmacharya is not abandonment of sex but transcendence or overcoming of it through it. Within Hinduism the Kapalikas and Pasupatas appear to have been the first tantrik sects. The *Maitrayani*, a late Upanishad, the *Gathasaptasati*, which very likely was produced between 200 and 450 A.D., and the *Manimekalai* produced in the post-Sangam Age (i.e., after 250 and before 600 A.D.), both mention the former, and an inscription at Mathura of 380 A.D., the latter. By the name of Nayasoma (Somasiddhanta), Kapalika was alluded to by Asanga also. Uddyotakara (c. 620 A.D.) of the Nyaya school seems to have been the first important Hindu thinker who declared himself a tantric, for

he was a Mahapasupata. All this shows that tantra had emerged as an identifiable trend by the fourth century A.D. and had developed by the 7th century. Nothing tantric is found in Nagarjuna's work, or in that of his contemporaries. He could not have been a tantric because as yet there was no tantra and there is no evidence to show that he originated it or even introduced it into Mahayana. It is, however, credible that he was a mystic who practised dhyana (meditational techniques) and was a worshipper of Amitabha.

But there is another point. Tibetan accounts say that he practised Mahamayurividya. Mahamayuri is a goddess who is considered to be an emanation of Amoghasiddhi, one of the Celestial Buddhas (Shyanti Buddhas). One Srimitra translated a treatise concerning her worship into Chinese between 307-42 A.D., and Kumarajiva translated into Chinese *Mahamayuri-vidyarajni*. What these books contain was perhaps a development of what was believed and practised possibly by Nagarjuna and others of his time. Maybe it was something like the Vidyas of the Upanishads. Some Mahasanghika sects which contributed to the development of Mahayana had dharanis, which correspond to mantras in Hinduism, from about the 1st century B.C. onward.

The *Guhyasamaja Tantra* and the *Manjusrimulakalpa* are considered to be the earliest full-fledged Buddhist tantric works. The first published from Baroda was attributed to Asanga, but in view of what Winternitz has pointed out, there is no basis for taking it to be such an early work. It was apparently confused with *Tathagataguhya Sutra*, an earlier work about which much is not known. A commentary on *Guhyasamaja* attributed to

Nagarjuna obviously cannot be his as it deals with topics which came to the fore only in the middle of the 7th century. The *Manjusrimulakalpa* in its present form cannot go back to a period earlier than the 7th or 8th century, as it refers to a king Sila of Valabhi in Lata (Gujarat) and between 590 and 710 A.D., there were three kings called Siladitya in Lata. It was translated into Chinese between 980 and 1000 A.D., and into Tibetan in the 11th century. The Chinese version contains only 28 chapters. Also containing tantric elements is the *Mahamegha Sutra*, translated into Chinese by Dharmakshema between 414 and 421 A.D. The *Sadhanamala*, the earliest manuscript of which only dates to 1165 A.D., contains a collection of tantric compositions written over the centuries, some of which claim to be the works of Nagarjuna and Asanga. Their content and form are such that their authors could be some pseudo-Nagarjunas and pseudo-Asangas, or maybe they were their namesakes. In the light of all this, Tucci's conclusion is irrefutable when he says : "The fact seems certain that the tantric works as a whole have no connection whatsoever with the founder of the Madhyamika doctrine."

If Nagarjuna was not a tantric, then why did he come to be associated with the Buddhist Tantra? Asanga, who introduced tantric tendencies and yoga into Mahayana, was a thinker himself deeply influenced by Nagarjuna, although he developed a different system of philosophy. Beginning about his time, by the 7th century tantra became an India-wide movement, and in all its forms—Saiva, Sakta, Vaishnava and Buddhist—it reached its peak in the 8th century. In each of its forms, there were a number of trends. Buddhist Tantra was generally

known as Vajrayana (the Adamantine Path or Vehicle). Vajra or adamantine essence is Emptiness, Sunyata, which consists in realising that all phenomena are impermanent momentary and devoid of self. "Sunyata Vajram ucyate". Sunyata and Karuna (compassion) are not different from each other. "Sunyata Karuna abhinnam". Karuna is one's strong determination to spread right knowledge and lead all beings to Nirvana, which is Emptiness, Consciousness and Great Delight (Sunya, Vijnana and Mahasukha). Nirvana is Vajra. Vajrayana is based on a non-dualistic philosophy (Advaitavada) which synthesizes Sunyata and Karuna. It is clear from this that Vajrayana was heavily indebted to Nagarjuna's philosophy—Sunyavada—and it is not surprising that Vajrayanists of later times considered him to be one of its first or earliest formulators or promulgators, even as Badarayana was looked upon as the first systematic teacher of Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita also. It is interesting to remember that in Hinduism there are some types of Saiva and Sakta Tantra which are indebted to Advaita.

An interesting phenomenon occurred in Vajrayana in the 7th century, although it had also been anticipated by Asanga. Its eroticisation began in this period, and this is associated with Saraha, said to be a Brahmin of Orissa, who was addicted to drinks, lived with a low-caste woman, daughter of an arrow-maker. I specially mention this because Saraha was not a non-Indian, as some earlier writers like Sir Charles Eliot had conjectured. The mystical chants of Saraha have been published; they are in Apabhramsa dialect and appear to have been composed in the 9th century. So it is doubt-

ful whether the history of eroticised Vajrayana began with him. In some accounts, Saraha is identified with Savari and Sabara, but they may have been different persons. Some Tibetan accounts merged his personality with that of Rahulabhadra, who lived before the 4th century, and one of whose compositions was incorporated in the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra* attributed to Nagarjuna. Some Chinese accounts say Rahulabhadra, was either a direct disciple of Nagarjuna, or of Aryadeva, and so indirectly a disciple of the former. In some Tibetan accounts, Rahulabhadra-Saraha is a teacher of Nagarjuna; according to Taranatha he is Nagarjuna's teacher as well as Aryadeva's disciple; in Bu-ston's "history" both Saraha and Rahulabhadra were his teachers and in some Tibetan accounts and, according to one Nepalese source, Saraha-Sabara is Nagarjuna's disciple. This confusion indicates the value of these accounts. It would add to the confusion to say that there were different Sarahas and Nagarjunas.

Sometime prior to the 11th century, but perhaps not before the 9th century, Vajrayana, Kapalika cult, Hatha yoga and alchemy came to be fused together and a syncretism emerged. A line of Siddhas (the Perfect Ones) or Nathas (the Masters) was, since the beginning of time, credited with having propagated it. Their ideal was to achieve perfect freedom, health and immortality through Hatha yoga and alchemy. Hatha yoga seeks to master the body and to transform it into an incorruptible divine body (vajra deha), the use of some metals, herbs and chemicals was also supposed to help this process. Endless prolongation of a free and happy life in a vajra deha was the ideal of this syncretism, which

was a magico-religious spirituality. Different accounts give the number of Siddhas and Nathas differently : 9, 35 or 84. None of these numbers, not all the Siddhas or the orders of their succession, correspond to any historical reality. Like the 24 Avataras of Vishnu, the 24 Buddhas (earlier it was only 7 Buddhas) of Sthaviravada, the 24 Tirthankaras and the 63 Nayanars, etc., the 84 Siddhas or 9 Nathas are quasi-historical. According to the *Charyacharyavinischaya*, the *Navanatha Charitra* and the *Hathayogapradipika*, Matsyendranatha or Minanatha was the first Siddha. He, it is claimed, received a revelation from Siva, the Primal Natha or Buddha Vajrasattva. The earliest references to him in literature are found in Abhinavagupta's *Tantraloka*, and in *Kaulajnananirnaya* (11th century). In some accounts, his son, also called Minanatha, is said to have been a disciple of Carpati (Capari), a Siddha venerated by king Sahila (10th century) of Chamba. So Matsyendranatha was probably of late 9th or 10th century. He became the tutelary deity in Nepal and was identified with Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Saiva Siddhas considered him to be a Son of Siva. What appears to be certain is that the Siddha Natha school arose after Dharmakirti, i.e., middle of 7th century, and most of the Siddhas lived in the Pala Age (which began about the middle of the 8th century), and their movement was pan-Indian and also spread to Tibet. Nepalese and Tibetan Buddhist and Saiva and Hatha yogic traditions equally sought to appropriate the Siddhas, who were themselves eclectic. Tibetan lives of Siddhas and the so-called histories of Buddhism give fantastic accounts of them, as do the "Bhakta-vijayas" and the "Bhaktamala" of the bhaktas

and other books of the Nayanars, etc. They were meant for edification and are not entirely factual. These accounts do not accord with one another and are also not self-consistent.

What is interesting is that "Nagarjuna" was incorporated into their lists of Siddhas by Saiva tantric sects. (i) The *Sabaratantra* gives a list of 24 Kapalikas among whom "Nagarjuna" is one. The same list is found in *Gorakshasiddhanta Sangraha*. (ii) The *Navanatha Charitra* mentions two Nagarjunas. The first, it recounts, was the son of king Narendrajit of the lunar dynasty, a son-in-law of the king of Malva. Owing to a curse, he was living as a snake in the hollow of a tree of the Arjuna species. Minanatha rescued him from this accursed existence and retransformed him into a human being. So he was called Nagarjuna, one who lived as a snake (naga) in an Arjuna tree. He then became Minanatha's disciple and by his grace became a great Siddha —one of the nine Nathas. He travelled in South India and Magadha. Among others, this Natha made one a Siddha, named the latter after himself and sent him to roam in Andhra. The second Nagarjuna went to Sri Saila Sri Parvata and resided there worshipping Siva. The story goes on that a king became a disciple and friend of this great alchemist and magician and he used to receive from him enormous quantities of gold. At his behest the king built a great hill-fort on the other side of the river Krishna to the north of Elesvaram and to the north-west of the Asvamedha hill and named it after this Siddha. The king provided a guard for him too. The king also was called Tyaga-Nagarjuna. It is difficult to take this as a reference to the founding of Nagarjunakonda fort, because the story narrates that the hill-fort was built on the other side of the river to the north of Elesvaram. This Siddha set about to transform Sri Saila mountain into gold, and so was killed by Vishnu by a stratagem because so much gold freely available would have jeopardised the world order. It may be recalled that friendship with a king and providing him freely with gold, and the king providing the sage with a bodyguard are found in the Chinese accounts about Nagarjuna, and Tibetan sources speak of Nagarjuna's desire to turn the Ghantasaila and Dhinkota mountains into gold, and his being prevented from doing so by goddess Tara's advice. As the Buddha was adopted into the Hindu pantheon, and then a mythology developed about him, so was Nagarjuna taken over by the Saiva-Siddha traditions and tales woven about him. It does not seem probable that there was a real Kapalika or Saiva-Siddha called Nagarjuna, and that stories about him and the Buddhist philosopher were fused together. This conclusion is confirmed when we read the romantic tales and legend-complexes recorded in the *Brihatkathamanjari* of Kshemendra (about 1037-1066 A.D.), the *Kathasaritsagara* of Somadeva (written 1063-1081 A.D.) and the *Prabandhachintamani* of Merutunga (14th century), all of which refer to "Nagarjuna". In them he appears as a Bodhisattva, wise and compassionate, a great alchemist, a Siddha who prepared an elixir of life with which he made a king Chirayu immortal and made a magician fly through the air. J. S. Speyer in his "Studies about the Kathasaritsagara" commented that the "Nagarjuna" mentioned in it was the great philosopher, because it described him as "bodhisattvamsasambhavah", but it

would be more accurate to say that this was a composite Nagarjuna, the result of a blending of Buddhist legends, Siddha traditions and popular story matter. The Buddha of the Puranas is not the Sakyamuni whom the Buddhists venerate, nor are the two different; for the former is almost a distortion of the latter but not a different person. The case of Nagarjuna Bodhisattva-Siddha Nagarjuna is analogous.

The magico-religious complex of Siddha ideology, and the practice coalescing with Buddhism of the post-Dharmakirti period and, so modified in this process, spread to Central Asia, Tibet and Mongolia and then as far as North Asia and Siberia. In the Siddha accounts given by Tibetan sources and one that is available in a Nepalese source, conflicting accounts of "Nagarjuna" are given. The following are mentioned as the places or regions where he was born : Kahora, Karahataka, Vidarbha, region or place to the south of Vidarbha, and Videha. All of them say he was a Brahmin, while according to one, he was the son of a king. His relationship with Saraha and the improbability of the latter belonging to the 7th century have been mentioned. The sources give different lists of Siddhas, each with a different order of their succession, and sometimes the same source gives contradictory orders of succession. Some of these relating to "Nagarjuna" are the following :

(i) "Nagarjuna", Vyadi, Kambala and Indrabhuti is given as one order of succession. If Vyadi is the alchemist of that name and Indrabhuti was the one who lived towards the end of the first half of the 8th century, "Nagarjuna" of this list would belong to the 7th century. This, however, is far from certain, because there

were two and possibly three Indrabhutis, and the one in this list may not be the first Indrabhuti but the second who lived much later. (ii) A Brahmin of eastern India Na-ro-pa (Nadapada) was noticed by "Nagarjuna", when the former as a youth was herding cows and he blessed that the cowherd would become a king. The cowherd did become a king in due course, but he tired of royal life, abandoned it, and became an itinerant monk. He rose to become the head of Nalanda University and later a great Siddha. Na-ro-pa was one of the important teachers of Mar-pa (1012-1097), who was a great authority on Tibetan Buddhism as well as on Atisa Dipankarasrijnana (982-1054). He became the head of Vikramasila University and later went to Tibet and became a moulding force of Tibetan Buddhism. This would assign "Nagarjuna" to the end of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th. (iii) "Nagarjuna" became a disciple of Padmasambhava, and he mastered all sciences and magic under him. He received the *Prajnaparamita Satasahasrika*, hidden in the realm of serpents, from their king Muchilinda for having cured the latter. Muchilinda, it is said, was the custodian of scriptures in Vikramasila University. These events would make "Nagarjuna" a man of the second half of the 8th century. (iv) Another order of succession is given as "Nagarjuna", Sabara and Advayavajra in that order. The last Siddha is known to have been connected with persons of the 10th century. So this would assign "Nagarjuna" to the beginning of that century or to the end of the 9th.

None of the above accounts is historically more reliable than the others. The inclusion of Nagarjuna

in Buddhist-Siddha lists, like his inclusion in Saiva-Siddha lists, does not prove that he was a Siddha, or that there was *a* Siddha Nagarjuna, any more than Kapila's and Sankara's inclusion in the Sakta lists proves that there was *a* Sakta Kapila and *a* Sakta Sankara. As the following paragraph will show, there might have been a number of Siddhas each called Nagarjuna, but there certainly was not just one Siddha Nagarjuna. In all accounts of "Nagarjuna", incidents relating to the great philosopher of the 2nd-3rd centuries, as well as others which might have occurred at various times between the 7th and the 10th centuries, are all attributed to one and the same person. Why did intelligent and learned Tibetans and Indians give such accounts? This may be explained in one of the following ways.

(i) The Tibetan Lama tradition came to believe that Nagarjuna born in the first century B.C., lived for 600 years, working in the world for 300 years and thereafter went into spiritual retreat for another 300 years, and that, as he transmuted his body into a glorious 'rainbow-body' (*jai-lus*) through yoga, he is still alive and can at will become visible or invisible, and that the occult sciences arose through him and his followers during the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. (ii) Mahanaga became a kind of title to designate men who had attained a high spiritual stage. The *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra* says a Mahanaga is a great man (maha=great) who has freed himself from sin (na=not, ga=sin), or one who has far greater power than the other arahats (those who have attained enlightenment). Another authority, Haribhadra, explains that a Mahanaga is one who is the foremost (mahapradhana) among the holy, one of those who have

won a great victory in the battle to overcome passion (klesa). Possibly the term "Nagarjuna" may also have similarly acquired a symbolic significance and a number of persons were so designated either because they had acquired spiritual eminence, or they were given that name after initiation into tantric mysteries. We have many Sankaras for a similar reason. This might have led to confusion in both cases. (iii) A bodhisattva like Nagarjuna may have been believed to have reincarnated himself a number of times for the welfare of the world. So, in later times, Siddhas who showed comparable spiritual eminence may have been considered as his manifestations (rnam a'prul), and all their lives considered as one continuous sequence. (iv) The impact on religious history of the great mystic and polymath was so great that an exemplary image of him was formed by collective memory and became the only one to be retained by it. Consequently, the accounts we have are of the composite Nagarjuna. His historical figure was mythicised and to his own substantial achievement the Chinese, Indian and Tibetan traditions added magical and tantric accomplishments and produced "biographies" of this image, a reality to the faithful. As even Kumarajiva's biography has pictured Nagarjuna as an adept in magic, it is possible that there was no Siddha Nagarjuna who was a magician. The one composite Nagarjuna, or the Nagarjuna Image, was the thinker, bodhisattva, tantric, siddha and magician. As one "Vyasa" classified the Vedas and also wrote the Brahma Sutra, the Mahabharata and the 18 Puranas and did many other things, similarly, one "Nagarjuna" propagated the *Prajnaparamita* wrote the *Madhyamika*

Karika and other philosophical treatises and many tantric and some magical works (e.g., the *Kakshaputa*), and did many other things.

I am inclined to accept the last alternative hypothesis.

V NAGARJUNA AND SCIENCE

THERE IS no doubt that Nagarjuna was a polymath. Early Chinese accounts say he was an astrologer-astronomer, biologist, mineralogist, chemist-alchemist and renowned physician. His treatise on the eye and many of his prescriptions are found in Chinese. Dallana of the 13th century, who commented on the *Susruta Samhita*, states that Nagarjuna revised Susruta. Julius Jolly thinks this was the philosopher Nagarjuna. It has also been said that Nagarjuna added a supplement, *Uttara Tantra*, to *Susruta*. But the *Susruta* text now available was fixed only in the 11th century when Chakrapanidatta wrote his commentary on it, though Susruta is mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and in the medical tracts of the 4th century A.D., which were discovered at Kashgar by Bower and have been published as *The Bower Manuscript* by Hoernle. So we do not know whether Susruta preceded Nagarjuna and whether the latter had any hand in developing any of the theories and methods of Susruta. Similarly, the *Yogasataka*, containing one hundred therapeutic formulae, available in many Nepalese and Simhalese versions and also in Sanskrit from Kucha (a small Central Asian State), is sometimes attributed to Nagarjuna and sometimes to Vararuchi. It is not Nagarjuna's. The same is the case with the *Arogyamanjari*, etc. The treatises on metallurgy and the science of love (*Lohasastra* and *Ratisastra*) ascribed to him are also not authentic.

The *Rasaratnakara* in its present form appears from

internal evidence to be a work of the 7th or 8th century A.D. It describes some chemical processes, in the form of a dialogue, between "the great siddha Nagarjuna, resident of Sri Saila and benefactor of all beings and endowed with all splendour and wealth (bhagya)", and king Salivahana. It would thus appear that Nagarjuna was the father of Indian Chemistry. This book is sometimes attributed to Siddha Nityanatha, and has many recensions. It is probable that the book was produced in a Buddhist milieu. The *Mahaprajna-paramita sastra*, attributed to Nagarjuna, talks of metamorphoses (nirmana) of substances into gold by vegetable or mineral alchemy, magic and force of concentration (samadhi-bala). The *Rasopanishat* mentions sage Nagarjuna's vision of a process by which rocks with gold deposits were extracted somewhere in Kerala. All this only proves that it was believed that Nagarjuna was a chemist or alchemist. Though the available redaction of the *Rasaratnakara* is said to be late, a Taoist alchemist Ko Hung of the 3rd or 4th century imitated the *Rasaratnakara*. So it "might really go back to the period of the Buddhist Nagarjuna of the second century". We cannot know whether it does contain any of the ideas of our philosopher.

Alberuni wrote that one Nagarjuna, native of fort Daihak near Somnath, lived a hundred years before his own time, and that he was "a famous representative" of the art of rejuvenation (rasayana) in which he excelled and on which he wrote a book containing the substance of all the literature on it. Alberuni, who visited India about 1030 A.D., may have recorded a tradition about the composite Nagarjuna, or a practitioner of rasayana may have actually lived in western India round about 900 A.D. It may be recalled that according to tradition Nagarjuna knew this art, and one source speaks of his belonging to western India. So Alberuni's story may be about the composite figure.

There is nothing improbable in a great philosopher being a scientist. History records a number of such examples. Aristotle, we may recall, also wrote on physics, botany, meteorology and psychology. The polymath al-Kindi was, besides being a philosopher, a noted physician and wrote on geography and history. The philosopher Ibn Sina was also a reputed physician; the philosopher Ibn Roshd a jurist and physician as well; and Alberuni wrote on religion, astronomy, geography and ethnology. In our own time men like Spencer, Huxley, Russell and Whitehead have all made contributions in more than one field of knowledge. But while it is likely, in view of the unanimous tradition, that Nagarjuna was a chemist and physician, we do not know if he really did make any original scientific contributions.

PART TWO

VI BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNTS

DISCUSSION IN the previous part enables us to review briefly the contents of the Buddhist sources for Nagarjuna's biography, which can be divided into Siddha accounts, "histories", scriptures and biographies.

1. Of the first kind, we have the following: (i) *Grub-thob*, translated into German by A. Grunwedel with the title "The History of the 84 Sorcerers" (*Die Geschichte der 84 Zauberer*, Leipzig, 1916). It claims to be based on a Sanskrit work, probably of the early 11th century, whose author might have been one Abhayadattasri. (ii) "The Book of Seven Revelations" by Cho-jung or Taranatha (born 1573 A.D.), translated by A. Grunwedel as *Taranatha's Edelsteinminne* (Petrograd, 1914). The German translation has been summarised by B. N. Datta and published under the title *Mystic Tales of Lama Taranatha* (Calcutta, 1957). (iii) The Nepalese Sanskrit "Siddhanam Amnayah" (The Mystical School of Siddhas) published by G. Tucci. These three works agree that Nagarjuna was a Brahmin born in Dakshinapatha (South India), that he was a great scholar, tantric, magician and alchemist and that he built innumerable temples and wrote many books. The first two sources further state that he studied in Nalanda University and, according to his prophecy, an Abhira boy became a king. Now either this king or another one became Nagarjuna's close friend and was endowed by Nagarjuna with perpetual youth and long life and at the request of

that king's son (or by the god Brahma, according to *Grub-thob*), he gave up his life (see below). In later life, for several years he lived on Sriparvata; and he lived for hundreds of years. The second source also says that he brought *Prajnaparamitas* from the nether-world of serpents. These books disagree on details on these points and disagree totally on almost all other points. Their historical value is minimal.

2. Of the second kind, we have the following : (i) *History of Buddhism* by Bu-ston (1290-1364 A.D.), translated by E. Obermiller (Heidelberg, 1931). Bu-ston, abbot of Sha-lu monastery, is considered as being one of the greatest scholars Tibet has ever produced; he completed his history in 1323; and he is the Veda-Vyasa of Tibetan Buddhism, for he compiled its canon. On the Buddhist doctrines, schools and their development, his book contains a mass of valuable information, but it is not very good from the standpoint of chronology and facts relating to persons and events. (ii) Taranatha's *History of Buddhism*, completed in 1608, translated by A. Schiefner under the title *Geschichte der Buddhismus in Indien* (St. Petersburg, 1869). Its English translation has already appeared serially in *Indian Studies: Past and Present*, Calcutta, and is due for publication in book form from Simla. (iii) *History of Buddhism*, completed in 1747, by Sumpa Khampo Yese Pal Jor. S. Pathak has translated the account it gives of Nagarjuna's life. (iv) "The Mirror of Crystal : An Elegant Treatise On Philosophical Schools (Siddhanta)" by Thu'u-bkwan Blobzan-chos-kyi-ni-ma (1737-1802). Relevant material from this is found in the articles written by S. C. Das and Walleser. The last three books depend on Bu-ston

and *Grub-thob*, while Bu-ston himself depends on *Grub-thob*, the scriptures and tradition.

These sources broadly agree on the following points : Nagarjuna was a Brahmin born in South India in Vidarbha or, according to Sumpa Khampo, "in a place to the south of Vidarbha", 400 years after the Buddha's death. His parents had long remained childless because of their having given a religious feast to a hundred Brahmins, in accordance with a dream or prophecy. Although he was destined to die in infancy he was kept alive for 7 years by his parents giving two more such feasts. As astrologers had declared that he could not be kept alive any more, when the seventh year was about to end, he was sent awandering along with a servant because his parents did not want him to die before their eyes. In the course of his travels, he reached the Nalanda monastic university, and there through his chanting of Samaveda he attracted Saraha's attention, who gave him the mantra of Amitayus Buddha (Buddha of Infinite Life), through whose propitiation he became long-lived. He studied at Nalanda first with Saraha and then with Rahulabhadra, the abbot of Nalanda, according to Bu-ston, and later was ordained as a monk and rose to be the verger of the congregation, but, according to another account, he became the Head of Nalanda. He became in due course a great tantric, alchemist and magician; he built thousands of temples; brought *Prajnaparamitas* from the serpent-world; renovated and improved the temples at Buddhagaya and Amaravati; and became one of the greatest scholars and wrote many sastras. These "histories" also recount his prophecy of kingship, friendship with a king, although it is not clear whether

he was the same who became a king according to Nagarjuna's prediction. He conferred on this king perpetual youth and longevity by giving him an elixir. Finally, according to these "histories" he gave up his life at the prince's request and also his long residence on Sriparvata. He lived for hundreds of years; and years after his death, according to one account, he became alive again, but, according to another, he is going to reappear once again. On all these points also, the sources differ in details, but on others, they entirely disagree. A Lama tradition says that he was an incarnation of Ananda, Buddha's favourite disciple. Bu-ston and Taranatha are agreed on five of his major works. Sumpa-Khampo makes the interesting statement that to begin with he studied Sarvastivada; and he also gives, without any attempt to reconcile the conflicting traditions, his birth-place, etc. Some Tibetan "histories" state that Nagarjuna came 600 years after the Buddha. These books, like the *Puranas*, are just like mines which yield huge quantities of mythical ore but contain only a few golden particles of historical truth. Inaccurate about the names and chronology of even the Pala dynasty (from the middle of the 8th to the middle of 12th century) and the events which happened in that period in Bengal with which Tibet was in continuous contact, these "histories" cannot be expected to give facts regarding persons of antiquity.

3. Of the third type of sources, we have the following : (i) The *Mahamegha Sutra*, lost in the original, but preserved in a Chinese version of 414-421 A.D. as also in a Tibetan version. Unfortunately, the two versions do not agree. The first says that 1200 years after the

Buddha's death, in the time of king Satavahana, a great monk "Nagaraja" was born in a village Kusumamala or Sumanamala near the river Supaya in the kingdom of Surashtra in South India, and he sacrificed his life for protecting Dharma. As against this, the second says that 400 years after the Buddha's death near the village Mahavaluka on the northern bank of the river Sundarabhuti in a country called Rishila in South India on ground belonging to Vaisyas, a Licchavi was born in king Vipattichikitsaka's time. He became a monk called "Naga", bore also the Buddha's name and propagated Dharma and gave up his life for it. This discrepancy between the two accounts makes both dubious. Possibly, the second account relates to another monk, Nagabodhi or Nagabuddha. (ii) There is a passage in the Sagathaka chapter of the *Lankavatara Sutra*, not found in Gunabhadra's first Chinese translation (443 A.D), but found in the translations of Bodhiruchi (513 A.D.) and Sikshananda (700-4 A.D.). Its Sanskrit original also is available. This chapter is an addition made between 443 and 513 A.D., as Gunabhadra did not know it, and as it refers to the Guptas and Mlecchas. It says : A great monk called "Nagahvaya", born in Vedali in South India, put an end to the extreme views of being and not-being, expounded Mahayana as the Buddha's teaching, reached a high level of spiritual attainment and went to the Sukhavati heaven after death. While the Chinese versions do not mention any dates, the extant Sanskrit text says he was born 400 years after the Buddha's death and lived for 600 years. In the Tibetan books we come across another person "Nagahvaya"; so there is a doubt whether this scripture refers to Nagarjuna. But we can rely on its

translators who take it as referring to him. (iii) *The Manjusrimulakalpa* says that 400 years after the Buddha passed away, a monk called "Nagahvaya" appeared, lived for 600 years, attained a high spiritual level and did much good (hita) to Buddhism. He was a great soul, proficient in different sciences and a master of Mayurividya. He expounded the truth of non-substantiality (nissvabhavartha). After death he went to the Sukhavati heaven, and finally he would become a Buddha. It is clear that both these works refer to the same person, and as both mention that the Madhyamika philosophy was expounded by him, there is no doubt that they refer to Nagarjuna. This last scripture in its present form was produced in the 7th or 8th century, translated into Chinese in another redaction between 900 and 1000 A.D., and into Tibetan in the 11th century. It is the chief source of the entire later Tibetan historical tradition. (iv) *The Mahamaya Sutra* says that, 700 years after the Buddha's death, the monk Nagarjuna appeared, extinguished false views and held aloft the torch of Dharma. (v) The *Mahabheri Sutra* also refers to his high spiritual attainment. But as the last two are not mentioned among the names of Mahayana scriptures given either by Santideva in *Sikshasamuccaya*, or the *Mahavyutpatti*, they may not be genuine. All these scriptures, it has to be added, refer to Nagarjuna in the form of prophecies.

Being earlier and the bases of what the Tibetans wrote about Nagarjuna, the scriptures are unquestionably more reliable. They testify to the high position the Mahayana tradition had accorded to him by the fifth century. He was (a) a South Indian, (b) the first great teacher of Madhyamika or Sunyavada, (c) a polymath, (d) a

person of high spiritual attainment, and (e) one who became legendary and paradigmatic by the fifth century. These are some of the facts we can garner from the scriptures.

4. We now come to the last type of sources. (i) Kumarajiva (344-413 A.D.) seems to have given an oral translation in Chinese of an Indian biography of Nagarjuna, which his disciples later put into writing. So this Chinese biography was Kumarajiva's account as worded by his disciples. It was first printed in China in 972 A.D., revised and published in Korea in the 11th century, again revised throughout and published in China in 1239 A.D., and later reprinted twice with slight variations. So we do not have an early authentic text in the extant Chinese editions of Kumarajiva's biography. Long ago, Ivan Wassiljew in *Der Buddhismus*, Pt. I, gave a brief summary of it. Then, in 1923, Walleser in his paper gave an adequate summary and a critical estimate of it. (ii) Hsuan-tsang (596-664), the famous pilgrim to India, in the 8th and 10th chapters of his *Records*, has provided biographical material concerning Nagarjuna. This is a less legendary account than Kumarajiva's. Besides, as the latter was not written by Kumarajiva himself and was worked over a number of times, where they differ, Hsuan-tsang's may be safer to rely upon. Hsuan-tsang's statements, remarked Walleser, "show that they relied upon reminiscences of a being of flesh and bone though legendary traits are not always wanting". In 1905 T. Watters in *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Vol. II, has given an excellent summary with critical comments on Hsuan-tsang's material. In 1883 Beal translated the *Records*. (iii) Several works in

the Chinese Tripitaka give succession lists of patriarchs (Tsu Shih) of Buddhism, and each school of Chinese Buddhism had its own list, but according to most schools there were only 24 Patriarchs. It is probable that like the 24 Avataras, 24 Buddhas and 84 Siddhas, this is a mythical number and very probably Indian Buddhism did not have an institution of Patriarchs. Anyhow, a work called *Fu-fa-tsang-yin-yuan-ching*, which professes to be based on *Dharma Pitaka Sutra* and claims to be a translation made in 472 A.D. of an Indian work, acquired much authority. As its Sanskrit original is not available and as the Tibetan canon does not know it, it is probably only a Chinese compilation of the sixth century. According to it, Nagarjuna was the 13th Patriarch, the 12th being Kapimala and the 14th Aryadeva. However, the list is rather important for it is an early one and connects our philosopher with these two men whose works are preserved in Chinese and Tibetan canons. There are a number of such lists and while in most Nagarjuna is included, in some (e.g., of Sarvastivadins) he is not. (iv) Hui-Yuan (334-416 A.D.), a correspondent and follower of Kumarajiva, abridged the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra* and wrote a preface to it. In it he summarised Nagarjuna's biography. Robinson in his book has given a translation of this preface. (v) F-Yun's Dictionary of Sanskrit Terms (Fan-i-ming-i-chi), composed in 1151 A.D., gives a short condensation of the original Indian biography. A translation of this is given in Walleser's paper.

In the next section, mainly based on the Chinese sources, an account of his life will be given.

VII HIS LIFE

Milieu

Throughout the whole of the 2nd century and upto 218 A.D., Dakshinapatha was ruled by the Satavahanas, who were the greatest power in the land since at least 180 B.C. Roughly, this area included much of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, a portion of southern Orissa and that part of Mysore which falls within the Deccan plateau. From time to time the Satavahanas lost and recovered portions of this vast territory, and occasionally their rule spread far into the north and into the south up to Kanchipuram and Cuddalore, and sometime it also receded. In this century in the farther south, the famous and ancient Trairajya-Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms were flourishing. For Dravidadesa it was the great Age of the Sangam. In western India the Scythians or Sakas were ruling with varying fortunes, and in the middle of the century for a short while they held sway over the Narmada valley and western Rajasthan. In the North the Yueh-chi or Kushanas, who ruled in glory till the middle of this century, were thereafter gradually driven to the north-west borderland; the consequent power vacuum in the Ganga-Yamuna valley was filled by the Bharasiva or Naga kings, who emerged in due course in central India as the dominant power. In the east there was no suzerain authority, and the situation gave the republican Lichchavis a chance to revive and gain importance. In this period Dakshinapatha and Dravidadesa had extensive maritime trade and cultural contacts with the Graeco-Roman world, South-East Asia and China. Similarly, trade and cultural interchange with Central and Western Asia was active and continuous. Trade was the ethos of this epoch, of which overseas commerce and increasing prosperity of the mercantile class and cities were important formative forces. Naturally, Buddhism, which from the beginning was predominantly but not exclusively a religion of rich merchants and urban elites, benefited from their munificence in this period. It is needless to add that the association of North India with Hellenistic culture was longer, and commerce and communication of ideas between North India on the one hand and Rome, Western and Central Asia and China on the other were not negligible; but in the early centuries of the Christian era it was Dakshinapatha and Dravidadesa which preserving inviolate their political independence and enjoying political stability could be most active in the exchange of goods and interchange of ideas with the external world and in the creation of new ways of thinking and artistic expression. Such was the milieu in which Nagarjuna was born.

Birth and Education

He was born in Dakshinapatha in a Brahmin family. As already stated, a work of 443-513 A.D. identifies his place of birth as Vedali, and a somewhat earlier but more dubious source says it was Kusumamala. While a pious Tibetan work of the 8th century appears to have confused Vedali with Videha, a Tibetan "history" of the 14th century erroneously

identified it with Vidarbha, and similar later works continued to propagate this error. The Satavahanas were "Andhras", whatever that may mean, and Nagarjuna was born in their empire, and it is almost certain he spent much of his working life in Amaravati and on Sriparvata in Andhra. But that does not prove that he was an Andhra; it is possible that born elsewhere he just came and worked here, like Dingnaga, the great logician, who was born in Kanchi but lived in Vangi. We simply do not know where in Dakshinapatha he was born. Parochialism has sought to prove that he belonged to Andhra or to an area near Nagpur.

We do not know in what year he was born, but he probably became influential sometime between 150 and 200 A.D. (supra Pt. I, Sect. III). We do not know his parents' names or anything about them. An unreliable source, the Nepalese 'Amnayah', says their names were Trivikrama and Savitri. We do not know where he studied. It is certain that he did not study at Nalanda and had nothing to do with the monastic university there. There is archaeological evidence to prove that the site was not occupied before the Guptas and that the university in all probability was founded in or about 425 A.D.

From childhood he studied the Vedas and Sastras. He learnt not only Vedic recitation, but also their meaning; and "fathomed" secular sciences. By the time he was twenty, he had become "world-famous" for his learning.

Then, Kumarajiva tells us, bored with life Nagarjuna sought adventure and thrill, learnt magic and used to enter a royal palace incognito and carry on an affair with princesses, but one day he was caught. This produced in him a revulsion for life and he vowed that if he escaped he would become a monk. Having miraculously escaped, he forthwith became a monk. This is a worthless story based on the usual motif that saints before they become saints often lead for a time sinful lives.

Quest and Fulfilment

By co-ordinating what the various Chinese sources say, we can give an account of his spiritual odyssey. As he grew up, worldly life did not satisfy him, nor could his Brahmanical learning and Hindu faith give him spiritual solace or metaphysical satisfaction. So he intensely studied the three Pitakas for three months and grasped their meaning. He gave up ambition and lived humbly and in retirement. Yet all this did not set at rest his doubts nor did it solve his problems. So he became a monk, lived in seclusion in woods and swamps and practised *dhyana*. That somewhat stilled his thoughts and he understood the subtle and penetrated the supranormal. He had thus an awakening of a sort, but felt there was something lacking and wanted to explore whether one could advance further.

So, continuing his spiritual quest, he began wandering, reached the Himalayas and, at a place formerly frequented by rishis, he met an old bhikshu. He studied some Mahayana scriptures with him, and came to value them and like them. But, though he understood their profound significance, he could not penetrate into their essence, and so he travelled all over India in search of more scriptures, but did not find any. During these

travels, in debates with Buddhists and non-Buddhists, he found that he was invincible. Because of this and because he studied all that was available, he felt he was omniscient and became proud. His critical mind found that the Mahayana scriptures, though profound, were wanting in logic, for they did not prove what they taught. What is not rationally demonstrable, he concluded, cannot be complete truth. Some of the criticisms of the Buddhist doctrines by non-Buddhist philosophers also appeared cogent to him. What is not completely self-consistent must be deficient, he concluded. All this made him a critic of the Buddhist scriptures and he could not any more consider the Buddha to be the master. He therefore announced : "I have no master." He decided to proclaim a new doctrine and set up a new monastic order with its own rules and vestments. For this purpose, he drastically revised and 'logically deepened' the Dharma, and fixed a day for proclaiming this new Dharma of his.

At this point a Mahanaga (maha=great, naga=serpent), who was a bodhisattva, saw him and out of compassion took him to the palace of serpents within the ocean and showed him seven precious receptacles in the palace hall. In them were safeguarded numerous abstruse sutras and wonderful dharmas. Of these, the Mahanaga presented to him the Vaipulya Sutras, which he studied for 90 days. He penetrated into their essence and obtained true benefit by understanding the uniform meaning of all the scriptures and thereby entered into a trance (samadhi) and perceived "non-arising". His passions were stilled, and defilements gone; he was thus not only won back to the path of the Buddha but also

became a bodhisattva. Out of the inexhaustible treasure of Sutras in the serpent palace, Nagarjuna took some, and he was brought back to South India by the Mahanaga. He read the Sutras again ten times, propagated and furthered Dharma, defeated in debates non-Buddhist philosophers, taught innumerable students and wrote many books. He made Mahayana flourish. Such is the account of his spiritual odyssey.

The kernel of historical truth in the above may be this : The problems of evil existence deeply agitated him. Hindu scriptures and philosophy did not give him solutions that were satisfactory to him. Studies of Sthaviravada also did not give him peace of mind, nor did asceticism and a mendicant's life. Then some old monk drew his attention to Mahayana. If there is an element of truth in the Patriarchal tradition, this old monk might have been Kapimala. Mahayana also did not completely satisfy him. So for a time he entertained the idea of founding a new philosophical school and a new monastic order, with a new set of doctrines consisting maybe of only those teachings of the Buddha which were logical. Then the Vaipulya Sutras came into his hands and by their study he found the light he was seeking; they removed all his doubts and solved all his problems, and by practising what they taught he obtained enlightenment and emancipation. Henceforth, he became a loyal devotee of the Buddha and propagated his Dharma. In all probability, the Vaipulya Sutras which fulfilled his spiritual needs were the Prajnaparamita Sutras which just then were spreading among some Buddhist sects.

The Naga Myth

The myth of his bringing Vaipulya Sutras from the serpent palace may be understood in one of the following ways :(i) He was the first great teacher to accept their authority and build a philosophical system on them. To prove their authenticity and explain away their recent origin, the legend was spread that, though they were the very words of the Buddha, they were hidden away by the serpents and, when the right time for their dissemination came, they were revealed to mankind through Nagarjuna, found to be the proper recipient of their revelation. "Nagarjuna", if it is an actual name, could have suggested this legend. (ii) The Nagas might have been a Prakrit-speaking people inhabiting some part of Dakshinapatha, who had the serpent as their totem and who first gave rise to Prajnaparamita literature in Prakrit, which was later Sanskritised. There is some ground for believing that this literature was created by worshippers of serpents and the mother-goddess. The Jatakas mention the Naga kings. The Bharasivas were Nagas, so probably were the Chutus, who ruled in Maharashtra and Kuntala after the Satavahanas. Some princesses of the Ikshvaku dynasty which ruled Andhra married generals and viceroys who had the suffix 'Naga' to their names, e.g., Visakhanaga, Kammanaga, etc. A famous early Pallava king, Virakurcha, married a Naga princess and the Sangam literature mentions Naga chieftains. The Gupta emperor, Chandragupta Vikramaditya, also married a Naga princess. The Nagas were quite a famous people who played a not negligible role in Indian history. A myth developed that their sacred books

were guarded and transmitted by serpents. I am inclined to accept this second hypothesis.

One may ask why in either case serpents were chosen as transmitters of mystic doctrines. In Indian folklore serpents symbolise primordial sacrosanctity, concentrated in the bowels of mother earth; they are the guardians of treasures and sacred precincts: they preserve the holy against all profanation, and permit access to it only to the initiated and the worthy. Serpents may also symbolise the wise (cf. St. Matthew, X. 16), and the Mahanaga who initiated Nagarjuna into Perfect Wisdom (Prajnaparamita) may just represent the chief among the Wise. It is also interesting that these books were brought from the ocean and not from above, from heaven. The concept of the ocean as the reservoir of the sacred—as a symbol of the transcendental world—could have arisen only in the context of a marine culture and South Indians of the Satavahana-Sangam Age were a maritime people in contact with South-East Asia. This may also be the place to mention that, according to the great writer Bana (7th century), Nagarjuna brought from the underworld of serpents, as a gift from their king Vasuki, a beautiful and resplendent pearl-wreath, which was potent against all poison and the touch of which relieved all pain.

His Name

It is possible that the name which our philosopher's parents gave him was not Nagarjuna, and this might not have been also the name given to him when he became a monk. It could be a name by which either he called himself or he came to be called that after he

became a famous acharya; but it was apparently allowed by him in usage and in the colophons of his works. We cannot know whether this name gave rise to the myth about his visit to the serpent world, or whether a belief or claim that he visited it led to his being called by that name. Similarly, we cannot know whether Kalidasa was so designated because he was a devotee of Kali, or whether the legends about his devotion to her and winning her favour developed because of this name. And so is the case with Sankara : did this name suggest the idea that he was Siva's incarnation or was he called that because he was believed to be Siva incarnate? If these were connotative names acquired later, we do not know the names during their childhood and youth before these persons acquired reputation. Some of these famous Indian names are wrapped in mystery. The *Lankavatara* calls our philosopher "bhikshuh sriman", lit., a glorious monk; but this led Bu-ston to think that after ordination he was known as monk Sriman. But Sumpa Khampo writes that after ordination he was called Sriprajnadhara. There is no basis for that either. The older Chinese books translated the name Nagarjuna as "Lung-shu" (Serpent-tree), and Kumarajiva explained that he was so called because he was born under a tree of the Arjuna species and obtained the Way (to salvation) from serpents. In some books it was translated as "Lungsheng" (Serpent-prevailing), while Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing translated it as "Lung-meng" (Serpent-valiant). Tibetans translated it as "Klus-grub" (the one perfected by serpents).

Bu-ston, taking the suggestion from Chandrakirti's verses of homage to Nagarjuna, explained the name

thus : As a serpent (naga) is born from the sea and avoids both the shores, our philosopher was born from the ocean of enlightenment (sambuddhadhisagara) and avoided both the shores ('Is' and 'Is not'); as a serpent possesses diamonds and gold, he possessed the treasury of true Dharma (saddharmakosa); and as a serpent's fiery eyes and poison burn, his fiery insight and dialectic burnt down the opponents' doctrines and lighted up the minds of all. So he was called Naga. As the arrows of Arjuna, the Pandava prince, destroyed enemy forces and acquired kingdoms, our philosopher's incomparable knowledge and words destroy the forces of evil and establish the kingdom of righteousness (tridhatu rajya-sriyam) for all men and gods who hearken to him (vineya loka). So he was called Arjuna. He was thus, says Bu-ston, a Naga as well as an Arjuna. This is an ingenious exercise but, as any Sanskritic name can be explained in a similar way, it establishes nothing.

Religious and Scientific Activity

He seems to have participated in Mahayana religious life consisting of the worship of the Buddhas, adoration of the Bodhisattvas, and the circumambulation (abhipradakshina) as well as the making of obeisance and offerings to stupas. He inspired the building of many temples, provided protection to the holy spot at Buddha Gaya against erosion by the Niranjana river, had the Bodhi tree and temple there surrounded with a stone edifice having ornamental lattices (vajragavakshas), and got the stupa at Dhanyakataka (Amaravati in Guntur district) enclosed with a railing. This last was a great artistic achievement (see below). He was probably a devotee of

Amitabha, one of the Celestial Buddhas, to the development of whose cult he appears to have contributed. Jam-yan bzad-pa (c. 1800 A.D.) in *Grub-mtha* says that it was Bodhisattva Manjusri who inspired Nagarjuna to develop Madhyamika philosophy. Through dhyana (Buddhist meditational technique) he ascended the spiritual summit, while his mystic attainments, great insight (prajna) and universal compassion (karuna) made all recognise him as a Bodhisattva. The *Nan-hai-ch'i-kwi* records that, through yogic methods like imbibing water through the nostrils, he achieved longevity.

While nothing definite could be said about his contribution to science, it is possible that he was quite distinguished in medicine and carried out studies in chemistry and metallurgy, and also dabbled in alchemy, just as the philosopher Berkeley messed about with tar water and wrote on its virtues.

Travels

It is credible that his wanderings in search of enlightenment took him to the Himalayas; he must have visited the holy places connected with the Buddha and he was, says Kalhana, for a time in Kashmir. He might have travelled propagating Dharma, and disputing with non-Buddhist philosophers, trying to vindicate Dharma and bring them to the right path. The *Fang-chih* says that in a great public discussion, which went on for twelve days in a monastery near Kukkutarama in Pataliputra, he refuted all non-Buddhist systems, and to commemorate this victory the king there raised a memorial tope called Gong-Call Tope. Hiuen-tseng, however, attributes this achievement to his disciple Aryadeva.

Residence

Hiuen-tsang wrote that Nagarjuna first lived in an old monastery with an Asoka tope near the south of a city in Kosala, and later in a great monastery, specially built for him by king Sha-to-p'o-ha (Satavahana), on the mountain Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li (Bhramaragiri), above 300 li (1 li = 1/6 mile) to the south-west of the capital of Kosala. But in Hiuen-tsang's *Life* by Hwui Li the region is mentioned as Dakshina Kosala, and some scholars assert that Hiuen-tsang wrote that this mountain was 300 li to the south of that country (not its capital). Sinologists agree that the names of the mountain and the king mentioned by Hiuen-tsang are appropriately identifiable as Bhramaragiri and Satavahana, respectively. The Sri Saila mountain in Andhra Pradesh where the presiding goddess is Bhramaramba or Bhramari seems to be the only mountain which has this name. But no important Buddhist remains have been found on it, and it is not above 300 li to the south or south-west of Kosala (or even Dakshina Kosala).

Hiuen-tsang was not a historian or geographer, he was a great scholar, but also a credulous medieval monk and a devout pilgrim who visited Buddhist holy places in India and gathered and recounted legends about them. According to him, Kosala was above 1800 li to the north-west from Kalinga and from Kosala above 900 li to the south was Andhra and to the south of Andhra over 1000 li was 'Dhanyakataka country' and to the south-west of this above 1000 li was Chola. The distances of these regions and their directions from one another as given by him are wrong and confused. And in his *Life* in the place of Kosala is found Dakshina

Kosala and, while its distance from Andhra remains the same, the direction changes, and the direction of Chola from Dhanyakataka is given differently. Moreover, he did not go to the monastery on Bhramaragiri, as he records that it fell into disuse and the way to it was not known. He claims to have been in Dhanyakataka, but does not even refer to the famous Amaravati Mahachaitya which archaeological evidence reveals was in existence from at least the late Mauryan times and continued to receive benefactions till as late as the 12th century A.D. Instead, he only writes about a crowd of deserted monasteries and twenty inhabited monasteries in 'Dhanyakataka country' and of two monasteries on hills to the east and west of the capital (unnamed by him) of that country. Evidently, he failed to see even the most important things in some of the places he visited. From such an author we can only accept what is corroborated by other sources. No other source says that Nagarjuna lived in Kosala or Dakshina Kosala. So it has nothing to do with Nagarjuna. On the other hand, his friendship with a Satavahana king is attested by other sources, and from the *Ratnavali* it appears he inspired a king to build a great temple. So on these points Hiuen-tsang is correct.

It has been argued that Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li should be taken to be a hill near Ramtek (near Nagpur), as that is on the border of Dakshina Kosala and as on that hill there are ruins of a monastery and as a cave in the hill is called Nagarjuna cave. This place cannot be the region spoken of by the Chinese pilgrim for it is not above 1800 li to the north-west of Kalinga and above 900 li to

the north of Andhra (with its capital Vengi, mentioned by him); the hill there is not 'the lofty and compact' mountain called Bhramaragiri; and the ruins there are not of a great monastery described by our pilgrim and worthy of a Satavahana emperor. About 30 miles from Gaya there is a Nagarjuni hill. It would be equally absurd to identify this with the mountain on which Nagarjuna's great monastery was built. It would be no less absurd to argue that Madhyamika philosophy arose in the city of Madhyamika (now called Nagari, six miles to the east of Chittor), which belonged to the Sibis and existed from the 2nd century B.C., upto the Gupta period.

It is possible to identify Nagarjuna's mountain monastery on the basis of other evidence taken in conjunction with Hiuen-tsang's. The Chinese pilgrim Fahien, who was in India about 405-411 A.D., described a five-storeyed monastery, Po-lo-yu (parvata), on a mountain in Dakshinapatha. His description of it on the whole agrees with Hiuen-tsang's description of the five-storeyed monastery built for Nagarjuna by a king. If we accept Watters' suggestion that Fa-hien might have misheard Parvata as Paravata, this could be the mountain now called Nagarjunakonda on the banks of the Krishna river in Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh, for there is inscriptional evidence to show that it was called Siriparvata (Sriparvata). This answers to the descriptions of Nagarjuna's mountain given from heresay by the Chinese pilgrims who never actually saw it. Tibetan and Indian accounts say that for several years Nagarjuna lived on Sriparvata in the South near Dhanyakataka. A great complex of monastic establish-

ments and stupas—nothing like which has been found anywhere in South India—has been discovered on it. Epigraphic evidence suggests that some of the establishments there go back to the later Satavahana times. It is a part of the Nallamalai range of mountains, of which Bhramaragiri (Sri Saila) is also a part. In the Ikshvaku period (about 218-260 A.D.) this whole range was called Sri-parvata. Inscriptions of the Telugu Choda, Reddi and Recherla kings and the Telugu literature of even the 14th century refer to Sri Saila as Sriparvata or just Parvata. An inscription of the Satavahana emperor, Pulomavi II, refers to this as Siritana (Sristhana) along with other mountains in his empire, and all the region around it—Mulaka—was within the empire. There is no other mountainous range called Sriparvata, Sri Saila, Srigiri or just Parvata. It was a holy mountain for the Buddhists, Hindus and Jains; it is famous both in literature and in legend. Sri Saila was the haunt of Kapalikas and later it was an important Sakta centre. Bana and Bhavabhuti refer to it; and a Cambodian inscription of 968 A.D. refers to it as being capable of conferring siddhi (siddhiprada).

We cannot say definitely when Sriparvata came to be called Nagarjunakonda. The Pallavas appear to have destroyed the Buddhist establishments on Sriparvata in the 3rd century after conquering the Ikshvakus. According to the "Kondavidu-sima-dandakavile", from the Chola times Nagarjunakonda was the centre of a sima (an administrative division), and there was a durga (fort) on it, to which were attached a number of simas. But local records of this class may not be prior to late 14th century A.D. Considering all

this, it would be plausible to hold that Sriparvata or Nagarjunakonda was the mountain on which Nagarjuna spent much of his later life. In a way Hiuen-tsang was not far wrong when he said that Bhramaragiri was the mountain on which his monastery was built, for that mountain was also called Sri Saila or Sriparvata, and it is also on the banks of the river Krishna; it is one end of the same mountainous range, Nagarjunakonda, also called Sriparvata, being the other end. This entire range—Nallamalais—is part of the Eastern Ghats.

It may be added that from Burgess, Vogel and Jouveau Dubreuil upto Demieville and Conze, almost all leading Western Indologists and most Indian savants identify Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li with Sriparvata, and consider it to have been our philosopher's residence. But some Indian scholars think that it was Siddha Nagarjuna who lived on it and not the great Madhyamika philosopher. It is likely that there was no such second Nagarjuna but even if one or more Siddhas of that name happened to exist, since such Siddhas would belong to the 8th century or later, it is far from possible that Andhra could have provided a milieu and Sriparvata a habitat for Buddhist Siddhas in or after the 8th century. Political and religious conditions would not have permitted it. As already stated, there were no Buddhist institutions on Sriparvata after 260 A.D. Such a hypothesis would also contradict the collective evidence which connects philosopher Nagarjuna with Satavahana and Sriparvata.

Before moving to Sriparvata, Nagarjuna probably lived in a monastery in or near Amaravati-Dhanyakataka in Guntur district. There are a number of reasons

in support of this. He could not have been the Satavahana king's friend and guide if he was inaccessible from the capital or the chief cities of the empire. These were Pratishthana, Amaravati and Vaijayanti. There is no evidence that he was connected with either the first or the last. The Amitabha cult seems to have arisen in Dhanyakataka (Dharanikota, "Dhingkota" of Tibetans). Bodhisattva Manjusri, the *Gandavyuha* (an early Mahayana scripture) informs us, lived in a vihara near the great city of Dhanyakataka (Dhanya-kara), and he converted to Buddhism a large number of Nagas living in the nearby forest. He is also associated with the Indrakila mountain in Vijayawada in Krishna district, about 35 miles from Dhanyakataka. The Prajnaparamita literature most probably saw the light in this area.

As already pointed out, Nagarjuna was intimately connected with all these. Besides, Indian and Tibetan sources state that it was Nagarjuna who got the Amaravati stupa enclosed with a railing. A pot containing the relics of his chief disciple Aryadeva has been found in Guntur district. The inscription at Jaggayyapeta referring to Nagarjuna has already been mentioned. Cumulative circumstantial evidence thus renders it likely that Nagarjuna first lived in or near Dhanyakataka-Amaravati and then on Sriparvata.

But all that has been stated above only proves that it is difficult to dissociate the great philosopher from Amaravati and Sriparvata and from the great moment of Satavahana power, that it is hazardous to associate him closely with any other region and king.

Royal Friend

The Tibetan story of a boy becoming a king, according to Nagarjuna's prediction, and then presenting him with jewels is to be dismissed as it is not supported by other sources. Kumarajiva speaks of Nagarjuna converting the king of South India by claiming, and also displaying, omniscience, after first attracting the king's attention to himself by always carrying before him for seven years a red flag. He also recounts another storyof how Nagarjuna defeated a Brahmin in a magical contest in the presence of the king of India. These incoherently narrated stories are obviously fantastic.

Hiuen-tsang wrote that king Satavahana treated Nagarjuna with great respect and had kept a guard of honour at his residence. He also built for him a great monastery spending nine crores of gold coins and, when during the course of its construction the royal treasury became depleted, Nagarjuna supplied abundant gold by transmuting rocks into gold. Hiuen-tsang's contemporary, Bana, has mentioned that Nagarjuna's "friend" was king Satavahana, the lord of the three oceans, to whom the former gave the pearl-wreath he had brought from the serpent-world. The *Rasaratnakara* (7th or 8th century) confirms Satavahana being Nagarjuna's disciple. I-tsing has also given the king's dynastic name as Satavahana. Thus the Satavahana-Nagarjuna relationship is beyond reasonable doubt.

Tibetan "histories", as is not unusual with them, messed up the king's name. The reasonable forms "Santivahana" and "Sadvahana" (expressible as Wenzel pointed by the term Bde-spyod) are found, but they also

confusingly use terms reconvertible as Utrayana, Udayana, Antivahana and Sankara for the same king. A Lama tradition identified him with Vikramaditya also (Evans-Wentz)! Schiefner, Wenzel and Walleser have shown that this was due to error and confusion. So there is no need to tarry on this point.

Ajitamitra, a commentator on the *Ratnavali*, stated that Nagarjuna wrote both the epistles to the same king. The epistles do not mention the king's name. The Chinese translators of one of them, the *Suhrllekha*, have given the king's personal name as Shiyen-teh-kia or Shan-to kia, restorable as Jetaka, Jantaka, Santaka or Sindhuka ; and one translator gave the name of his country as Shing-tu. S. Beal has suggested that the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit name was wrong and that the original name was Satavahana, equally deducible from transliteration.

While the *Suhrllekha* is impersonal, the other epistle, the *Ratnavali*, suggests the following information about the king : Nagarjuna's royal friend was not just a king (raja) but an emperor (mahabhauma). He got his possessions by being liberal in previous lives, and his kingdom through dharma. Nagarjuna exhorts the king to build a great and prosperous "abode of Dharma" (dharmaspada, i.e., temple) which could not be even conceived or dreamt of by mean kings and which would cause the hair of vassal kings to stand on end. It was better, the epistle says, not to build a temple which would not remain a glorious monument even after the builder's death. It advised the king to build such a temple when he was still in good health, for death might come any moment and charity had merit and was

important. The king, the epistle indicates, was a disciple (sishya), who had affection (sneha) for Nagarjuna, and was one worthy of receiving the true Dharma (saddharmabhajana). From the evidence provided by the *Ratnavali*, it may be justifiable to conclude that the royal friend was an emperor who came to the throne not through usurpation or by unjust means and that he was exhorted by Nagarjuna to build a Dharma-abode which would become a great wonder for the world. It is also plausible to hold that one result of this exhortation was the great railing at Amaravati, described by James Fergusson as "probably the most remarkable monument in India" and "the culmination of Indian art" and by A. K. Coomaraswami as "the most voluptuous and the most delicate flower of Indian sculpture".

It is not possible to determine which of the Satavahana rulers was Nagarjuna's friend. Bana's epithet "the lord of the three oceans" may suggest Gautamiputra Satakarni described in an inscription as "one whose horses drank the waters of the three oceans" (trisamudra toyapitavahana), but that is not possible, whereas it could be Satakarni, called in the inscriptions "lord of the entire South", who succeeded (Vasishtiputra) Pulomavi II. R. P. Chanda identified the royal friend as Pulomavi II himself, placing him in the middle of the 2nd century, maybe because the inscriptions at Amaravati mention him. Perhaps S. Beal in 1886 was the first to identify Nagarjuna's friend with Yagna Sri, assigning the latter to about 178-207 A.D. M. Winternitz and E. Lamotte also think that to be probable, the former assigning this king to 166-196 A.D., and the latter to the 3rd century. M. Walleser assumed that the king was

Vijaya Sri, who he thinks ascended the throne in 213 A.D. None of these conjectures can either be proved or disproved.

Death

We do not know how long Nagarjuna lived and how he died. There is one Tibetan tradition that indicates that he lived for 60 years, a number of other traditions according to which he lived for a hundred or hundreds of years, and there are still other traditions which state that he died and became alive again. But the consensus is that due to yoga and use of rasayana he had a long life, and this may be accepted. A Mahayana scripture states that he died for Dharma, but it does not explain how or why. Kumarajiva tells the story that Nagarjuna asked the Brahmin whom he defeated in magical contest, "Do you wish I should stay long on earth?" On the Brahmin replying "In reality I do not wish it," Nagarjuna retired to his apartment, locked himself and did not come out for a whole day. So the door had to be broken open but he was not inside; a cicada flew away at once from it. Hiuen-tsang recounts that Nagarjuna kept himself and his royal friend alive for hundreds of years, their lives being mysteriously intertwined. The king's youngest son was impatient to ascend the throne and the queen told him that this would not be possible unless Nagarjuna died, for unless he died the king would not die. Taking his cue from her, the prince went to Nagarjuna and begged him to give up his life for his (the prince's) sake. Nagarjuna complied by cutting off his head with a dry blade of grass, and immediately the king also died. With some embellishments and differences, Tibetan books also recount this story and give the prince's name as Saktiman or Susakti, but the *Grub-Thob* says Nagarjuna cut off his head at the request of god Brahma. While some sources simply say he went to Amitabha's heaven, Sukhavati, Tibetan "histories" go on to narrate how his head and trunk united once again and he became alive again and so on. These incredible stories are apparently worthless. However, as there is a near unanimity that he died on Sriparvata, this may be a fact.

Kumarajiva informs us that a hundred years after Nagarjuna's death temples were built for him in South Indian States and he was worshipped like a Buddha. In archaeological excavations at Nagarjunakonda in 1938, in a monastic cell in a vihar, a limestone purnakumbha, 15″ high and 10½″ wide in diameter at the body and 4″ at the mouth, was found. It contained nothing else except two small teeth. Some think that these are Nagarjuna's relics.

VIII HIS WORKS AND DISCIPLES

Works

Not all the works attributed to Nagarjuna may be his. But the following, among some others, are undoubtedly his works : (i) *Madhyamika Sastra* (The Middle Treatise) or *Mulamadhyamikakarikas* (The Basic Middle Verses). This is his greatest work. The original Sanskrit text, the Chinese and Tibetan translations, and many commentaries on it are available. Of the last, one is by Chandrakirti and its Sanskrit text is available; including Chandrakirti's, eight commentaries on it are preserved in Tibetan translations, and three in Chinese. There is a fairly close correspondence between the Sanskrit text and the translations. The Sanskrit text (449 verses) with Chandrakirti's commentary has been edited and published by L. de la Vallee Poussin (St. Petersburgh, 1903). It is perhaps the earliest work of the karika genre. (ii) *Vigraha Vyavartani* (Repudiation of Contests). It consists of 72 verses with the author's own commentary, and both are available in Sanskrit and in Chinese and Tibetan translations. E. H. Johnston and A. Kunst have brought out a critical edition of it (Bruges, Belgium, 1951). (iii) *Ratnavali* (String of Pearls). It is one of the epistles to Satavahana and consists of five chapters; it is available in Tibetan and Chinese translations and two Tibetan commentaries on it are available. The, first, second (incomplete), fourth and fifth chapters are extant in the original Sanskrit. Of these, the first three edited and translated by G. Tucci have been published

("Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society", London, 1934 and 1936). (iv) *Suhrllekha* (The Friendly Epistle). It is also an epistle to the king and contains 123 verses. The Sanskrit original has been lost, but it is preserved in three Chinese translations and a Tibetan translation. The Tibetan translation has been translated into English by H. Wenzel ("Journal of the Pali Text Society", 1886). In I-tsing's time it was very popular in India.

Two other works attributed to Nagarjuna which have exercised great influence in China and Japan are available in Chinese only. (i) *Dvadasamukha Sastra* (Twelve-Topic Treatise). It consists of 26 verses, with a commentary also attributed to the author. Of these, 21 are from *Madhyamika Sastra*. The commentary may not be by Nagarjuna. (ii) *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra* (The Great Perfect Wisdom Treatise). It is an encyclopaedic work in the form of a commentary on one of the Prajnaparamita Sutras. Some competent scholars have doubts about its authenticity; and it does seem to contain a good deal of material which is clearly not Nagarjuna's. The first thirty of its 100 chapters have been translated into French by E. Lamotte (Louvain, 1944 and 1949), and K. Venkata Ramanan has produced an authoritative and penetrating study of it.

Disciples

The foremost direct disciple of Nagarjuna was Aryadeva. Kumarajiva says that he was a Brahmin of South India, while Hiuen-tsang and Chandrakirti say that he was a Ceolonese prince. It is fairly certain that he worked and died in Andhra, because his relics have been found in Guntur district. As almost the entire Buddhist

tradition takes him to be Nagarjuna's chief disciple, and no known fact contradicts this, it is not safe to assign him to a later date.

According to Hiuen-tsang, Aryadeva first came to Nagarjuna to have a discussion, when the latter was staying in the monastery with Asoka tope. When the disciple at the door came and reported to Nagarjuna that Aryadeva was seeking admission, the former, who had already heard of the latter's fame, just gave a bowl filled with water to the disciple and asked that it to be shown to Aryadeya. When it was shown to Aryadeva, he silently dropped a needle into it and sent the disciple back. When this was reported to Nagarjuna, he said Aryadeva was a wise man of merit and instructed that he should be admitted. To the wondering disciple Nagarjuna explained that while the bowl of water symbolised his own universal knowledge, Aryadeva's dropping a needle into it signified that the latter had penetrated into it. Aryadeva came in with humility and wished to be instructed; Nagarjuna hailed him as a great scholar and told him he wanted to hand over to him the continuous lamp of Dharma (i. e., Patriarchy, leadership of Mahayana church) as he himself was becoming old and feeble. Nagarjuna then asked Aryadeva to discourse on Buddhism, and when the latter, about to begin an exposition, beheld Nagarjuna's majestic face, words failed him, and he became silent. Then Aryadeva declared himself to be a disciple and Nagarjuna reassuring him taught him true Dharma. Kumarajiva narrates that Aryadeva was waylaid and killed in a forest by a pupil of one of the non-Buddhist scholars whom he had vanquished in a public discussion.

Before he died he told his enraged disciples, who wanted to seek revenge on the assassin, that as everything was empty, neither the killer nor the killed existed, and so they should not have any thoughts of revenge. A dagoba was built on his relics and he used to be worshipped.

The *Chatuh Sataka* and the *Sata Sastra* are Aryadeva's principal works. Only about a third of the first is extant in the original Sanskrit, but it is preserved in Tibetan, and the original of the second has been lost but is available in Chinese. The *Sata Sastra* exercised great influence in China and Japan.

Chinese Buddhism believed in an institution of Patriarchs. The first Patriarch was Maha Kasyapa of Magadha to whom the Buddha handed over "the pure mystery of Dharma, the secret heart of Nirvana". The second was Ananda, Buddha's favourite disciple and first cousin. In an unbroken line of succession, Nagarjuna was counted as the 13th and Aryadeva as the 14th Patriarch. A Patriarch is one who, besides having a profound knowledge of Dharma, attains a very high spiritual level, has magical powers and is capable of rightly explaining Dharma. His mission is to spread Buddhism and defend it; he lives a simple ascetic life and keeps up his dignity by the qualities of his mind and character. It was generally held in China that there were 24 such Patriarchs, each selected by the previous one.

It is interesting that in the *Harsha-Charitha* Bana makes Divakaramitra, a great Buddhist sage living in Vindhyan forests, claim that he belonged to "the regular succession of pupilhood" descending from Nagarjuna

and that as such (after the Satavahanas passed away) he came to possess the pearl-wreath which Nagarjuna had brought from the serpent-world. Divakaramitra presented it to king Harsha (c. 606-647 A.D.). Round about 683 A.D., a monk called Divakara from Central India translated into Chinese Sridatta's (or Gunada's) commentary on the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* It is tempting to identify these two Divakaras. It is not unlikely that right upto the 7th century there was a line of teachers claiming unbroken succession from Nagarjuna.

The *Manjusrimulakalpa* mentions Nanda and Sangha as distinguished bhikshus who followed Nagarjuna; I-tsing also mentions another disciple called Naga. From epigraphic evidence we find that it was under the supervision of Ananda, a bhikshu of the fraternity of monks at Nandigama (Krishna district), that the mahachaitya on Sriparvata was renovated in Siri Virapurisadata's reign; inscriptions also mention a Naga Thera, another bhikshu who directed the building activity there during that period. Not very implausibly Subramanian suggested the identification of Ananda and Naga Thera of these inscriptions with Nanda and Naga mentioned as Nagarjuna's disciples by literary sources. The Jaggayyapeta inscription, which mentions one Jayaprabha who was Nagarjuna's disciple, has been referred to earlier.

IX HIS SCHOOL AND INFLUENCE

In India

From what has been said in the last section, there must have been a school of Nagarjunism or Madhyamika from the time of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. But the available works by philosophers of that school do not date back to a period earlier than the fifth century. Probably, in the early part of the fifth century, Buddhapalita, a South Indian, by his commentary on *Madhyamika Sastra* started a sub-school of Madhyamika by maintaining that *reductio ad absurdum* (prasangapadana) was the proper philosophical method, that true philosophy could only show that all philosophical propositions were absurd, and that it had no proposition of its own. The Madhyamika has no position, advances no theory and has, therefore, no positive arguments to prove anything. Chandrakirti, a South Indian perhaps of the late 6th century or early 7th century, by his commentary on the *Sastra* developed this view further. He is an acute and lucid thinker, and his Sanskrit commentary being the only work on the *Sastra* easily accessible to most Indian scholars, these scholars take his to be *the* Madhyamika view. Santideva (maybe early 8th century), a prince of Saurashtra who became a bhikshu, while following the prasangika method, placed emphasis on devotion to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and on ethics and spiritual discipline. Among the Madhyamikas, he is like Madhusudana Sarasvati among the Advaitins. His *Sikshasamuccaya* and *Bodhicaryavatara* are

important and popular books. Another sub-school was developed by Bhavaviveka or Bhavya, perhaps of the late fifth or early sixth century, who used to live on a mountain cliff not far from the south side of the capital of Dhanyakataka country. In his commentary on the *Sastra* and other independent works, he maintained that other philosophies could be refuted and Madhyamika philosophy positively established by arguments. Madhyamika, according to him, was a doctrinal system with a definite position of its own, and it could be sustained by logic. While the former sub-school rejected non-Buddhist systems and even Sthaviravada Buddhism as being totally false, Bhavaviveka admitted that they were only incomplete truth, and conceded that it was not the privilege of Sunyavadins alone to attain Nirvana, and that others too could attain it. The earlier seems to be a dogmatic school, while this appears to be a liberal one. Bhavaviveka, Hiuen-tsang informs us, was not only a master of sastras and a renowned dialectician, but he was also a spiritually advanced person. However, both these sub-schools, as the Tibetan scholar Khai-dub indicated, are only one-sided Madhyamikas (paksha-grahino Madhyamikah), while the philosophy of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva was integral Madhyamika.

Besides these there were other interpretations of Madhyamika. Round about 640 A.D., Simharasmi, a lecturer at Nalanda University, was maintaining that Nagarjuna's philosophy was not idealism but scepticism. A visiting Chinese scholar at Nalanda, called Tripitaka, wrote a treatise to refute this and to show that Nagarjuna's was an idealistic philosophy. I-tsing, who was in Nalanda for ten years from 673 A.D., wrote about

those in Magadha who devoted their entire attention to the doctrine of nothingness, neglecting Vinaya (discipline). This shows that Nalanda had become a stronghold of Madhyamika just as Valabhi University in Gujarat had become a great centre of Sammitiya school of Buddhism. It is strange that though most of the great Madhyamika acharyas were from South India, no strong centre of Madhyamika studies developed in the South.

Although "Maitreya" and Asanga wrote commentaries on Nagarjuna's works and were influenced by him, they developed Vijnanavada, another school of philosophy, which accepted some of his basic ideas. Sometime prior to 405 A.D., Asvaghosha (not the great poet), in his *Mahayanasraddhotpada*, attempted a brilliant synthesis of Madhyamika and Vijnanavada. In the eighth century Santarakshita and Kamalasila developed a school of philosophy which also sought to synthesise these two. It was this synthesised philosophy which was in ascendance in Nalanda and Vikramasila Universities from then on till the universities were destroyed in c. 1200 A.D.

The influence of Sunyavada on Vajrayana, Hatha Yoga and Siddhas has already been mentioned. There is no doubt that Madhyamika influenced Advaita Vedanta, both in its early form (Gaudapada) and in its dialectical elaboration (Sri Harsha). The division of scriptural passages as well as entire books into those concerned with ultimate import and empirical import of reality and truth into the absolute and the phenomenal, the theory of illusion, and above all the method of negating appearance—all these were first developed by

the Madhyamika school. It is not possible to assert that Advaita Vedanta, a later school, did not borrow these from the earlier school, having adapted them to the Upanishadic doctrine.

In China

Buddhism spread to China around the beginning of the Christian era, and "for roughly a thousand years the Chinese mind was largely dominated by Buddhism" (H. G. Creel). The great scholar Kumarajiva, son of an aristocratic Indian emigrant and a princess of Kucha, educated in Kashmir and Kashgar, who lived in Kutsang (in Kansu) for nearly seventeen years and then in Ch'ang-an (capital of Ch'in) for about eleven years and was honoured by the emperor, introduced Madhyamika into China by translating the three books—*Madhyamika Sastra*, *Dvadasamukha Sastra* and *Sata Sastra*. He also edited and translated the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra* and various other books. Soon a school of philosophy, based on the first three *Sastras*, developed, and it was called San-lun (Three-Treatise School). It was also called K'ung tsung, the School of Emptiness, or the School of the Middle Path. Hui-yuan, Seng-jui, Tao-sheng and Seng-chao were early Chinese Madhyamikas. All four were Kumarajiva's contemporaries, the first his correspondent and follower and the other three his disciples. Tao-sheng advanced a number of original theories, but it was Seng-chao who, incorporating Taoism into Madhyamika, developed a systematic philosophy. But the most important thinker of this school was Chi-tsang (549-623), son of a Parthian father and a Chinese mother; he was "one of the greatest systematisers of

Chinese Buddhist thought". He was a scholar who was honoured by Sui and T'ang emperors. Chi-tsang's philosophy was "completely Indian in view-point" though he too quoted the Taoists. San-lun "played a dominant role" in China from the fourth century and from the time of Chi-tsang it was a major school in that country till its decline in the ninth century. Along with Wei-shih (Vijnanavada), its rival school, it "dominated the Chinese intellectual scene" from the fifth to the seventh centuries.

Other Chinese schools of Buddhism like the Tien-T'ai, the Hua-yen and the Chen-yen were also influenced by Madhyamika. The Ch'an (Dhyana) School reckoned Nagarjuna to be among its Patriarchs and regarded him, says Dumoulin, as "the most important Indian link in the long chain of witnesses since Sakyamuni", and through him negativism, paradox, intuition and the concept of "thusness" (tathata) flowed into Ch'an. According to Sir Charles Eliot, the fundamental thesis of Bodhidharma, the founder of Ch'an (c. 520-6), that *bodhicitta* (enlightenment-mind, Buddha-nature) was the essential quality of the Buddha and that as everyone has it potentially in himself, everyone is identical with the Buddha and that one has to realise this by inward gazing, was taken from P'u-t'i-hsin-li-hsiang-lun, a translation of one of Nagarjuna's works. A long time ago, Joseph Edkins had remarked that while Bodhidharma was the nominal founder of Chinese esoteric schools, "the real philosophical thinker who gave them the impulse to reflection" was Nagarjuna. The Ch'an school exercised an enormous influence on Chinese thought, life, literature and art for some centuries.

The Amitabha sects of the Far East consider Nagarjuna as their first Patriarch and Vasubandhu as the second. The Amitabha scriptures were known to China since the 2nd century, but the Ching-t'u (Sukhavati, Pure Land) school, which taught the worship of Amitabha, was founded by Hui-yuan (333-418), and some of its most important teachers (e.g., Tan-Luan, Shan-Tao) began as students of San-lun and then became Amitabhaists. The Amitabha sects hold the doctrine of salvation by faith in Amitabha and their goal is the attainment of his paradise (Sukhavati) by his grace. Nagarjuna's *Suhrl-lekha* distinctly countenances the Amitabha cult.

In Japan

Buddhism was introduced into Japan in 538 (or 552) by the Koreans. But the real founder of Japanese Buddhism was Prince Shotoku (572-621), who, as Regent for thirty years, laid the foundations of Japanese civilisation as well as of a united Japanese nation. One of the greatest scholars of his time, he led a life above reproach, and he was perhaps the very best and benevolent of all rulers of Japan. He made Buddhism the State religion. Educated in the philosophy of the Three-Treatise School (called Sanron in Japanese), he "became the pioneer of philosophical thinking in Japan". Japanese Buddhism, wrote Sir Charles Eliot, "is the lineal and recognised descendant of the creed held by Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu and Santideva". All the Buddhist schools which flourished in China spread to Japan also, but it may not be wrong to say it was the Ch'an (called Zen in Japanese) and the Ching-t'u (Jodo in Japanese) schools which became the most prominent in Japan.

Although Amitabha worship and scriptures were known in Japan since at least 640, it was Genku or Honen (1133-1212) who founded the Jodo school. The first Zen school was established in Japan in 1191 and in course of time Zen became a great force in Japanese civilisation, thought and life.

In Tibet

Buddhism reached Tibet sometime between 620 and 649 A.D. In the reign (755-797) of King Khri-srong Idebtsan, a council was held at Lhasa in which Kamala-sila established "the Nagarjuna system" as "the only binding and orthodox religion". The king then ordered that "henceforth all Tibetans shall follow the Middle Doctrine of the Great Vehicle Teacher, Nagarjuna". Actually what prevailed in Tibet was the synthetic philosophy Madhyamika-Vijnanavada incorporating a good deal of Tantra. This continues to be the creed of the Lamas.

Korea and Mongolia

In the 4th century, from China Buddhism travelled to Korea through Manchuria, and it remained tied up with Chinese Buddhism. In both countries, from the 12th century onwards, Ch'an was the dominant school. Mongolia adopted the Tibetan form of Buddhism in the 13th century and the Mongols continued to adhere to it till recent times.

X HIS TEACHING

As this book is a biography of Nagarjuna and as the selections that follow give a summary of his philosophy in his own words, here I will only attempt a sketch of his philosophy. It may be mentioned that T.R.V. Murti's *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London, 1955) is an authoritative and comprehensive book on the Madhyamika system. Venkata Ramanan's valuable monograph has been referred to already. R. H. Robinson's *Early Madhyamika* is an important contribution. Streng's *Emptiness* is an acute study of 'Sunyata'. But for an attractive, brief and lucid account, S. Radhakrishnan's still remains the best. (*Indian Philosophy*, 1941, Vol. I, pp. 643-669, 697-703.)

Nagarjuna's philosophy avoids the extremes of affirmation and negation—'Is' and 'Is not'. It does not affirm that there is Substance or Self, nor does it deny them. It attempts to review critically what is and to be aware of things as they are. It is the Middle Approach or the Middle Doctrine. It is neither realism nor idealism, and certainly not nihilism. Nothing has its own-being; everything is what it is in relation to other things, and nothing has an independent existence. "Bhavah svatantro nasti". Moreover, nothing is an integral entity : things we see and deal with are made up of constituents (dharmas). But even these ultimate constituents have no substantiality or self and neither endurance nor momentariness. All things are mutually dependent and related : this mutual dependence and

interrelationship makes them what they are. The conditioned nature of all things—their mutual related dependence—constitutes their voidness, vacuity or emptiness: Sunyata. Not only is everything existentially thus related and determined, everything lacks any ascertainable, unique and permanent character or nature of its own. Nothing has a being or essence of its own. This is their Naisvabhavya, *i. e.*, having no svabhava (own-being). The world is in a flux, things are constantly changing, they are caused and are causing, they act and are being acted upon, and they come into existence and cease to be. So anything in it and the world as a whole too has no own-being, no self-essence, no permanent and unique nature of its own. Things which are conditioned and which mutually derive their being are not real. The dependent origination of things is Samvrti, Appearance. Relations constitute the world, but relations are unintelligible. A relation is neither identity nor difference, nor can it be given up; related things are neither together nor apart from one another. Our categories, the ideas by means of which we operate, are self-contradictory and are not explainable. So while they may be actual, they are not real. So, "there is no death, no birth, no distinction, no persistence, no oneness, no manyness, no coming in, no going forth." A reflective awareness (pratyaveksha) of the true nature of things—of all constituents of existence—based on a critical review of experience is *Prajna* (insight). Such an awareness reveals that things are neither eternal nor non-eternal, neither substantial nor non-substantial. Therefore, this is a philosophy of Advaya (non-two), an insight free from the duality of 'Is' and 'Is not',

being and becoming, atma and nairatmya.

But there is a Tattva—Reality—not apprehended by thought (buddher agocarah), which is unconditioned, quiescent, indeterminate and incapable of verbal elaboration (aprapancita). It is the Reality of the elements of existence—Dharmata—unborn and unceasing. It cannot be thought of as Being or Becoming, Consciousness or Matter, One or Many. This is the absolute truth, the Nissvabhavata—voidness of own-being—of all elements of existence. "Paramarthah—sarva dharmanam nissvabhavata." The other—that which we find in common sense and science—is conventional and empirical truth (lokasamvrti). The Real is also Sunya, for it is also devoid of all quality, distinctions, difference, relations and attributes. Thus in different senses the world as well as the Real is Sunya.

Therefore, there are no two : the absolute and the phenomenal, liberation and bondage, Nirvana and Samsara. That which is Nirvana is samsara; that which is the Buddha is the transmigrating individual; the Transcendent is the empirical. Nirvana is freedom from all conceptions (sarvakalpanakshaya). It is the Sunyata view-point, yet Sunyata is not just a view among other views (drshti); it is a 'view' which frees one from all views. "Muktistu sunyatadrshteh tadarthaseshabhavana". The Truth of truths is Emptiness : Insight into this is liberation.

Nagarjuna's ethics and political theory are important. Compassion (karuna) and truth should provide the motivation for all conduct; and truth is what is absolutely good for others. Unlike the Hindu Arthasastras, Nagarjuna pleads for a politics based on morality and a

jurisprudence based on compassion. The law-breaker, the guilty and the sinner are to be reformed by every means, for no one is beyond redemption; punishment should never be harsh or inhuman but should always aim at reforming and improving the character of the guilty. All this comes out clearly in the selections that follow.

As Nagarjuna says, in the *Suhrllekha* (118 ff), even a bhikshu solely devoted to spiritual life cannot completely fulfil all the demands of morality; it is impossible to do so for a man of the world. But there is no need to be obsessed with one's own moral imperfection comparing it with ideal perfection. One should sincerely follow the moral law to the extent one can, rejoicing in the virtues and goodness of others and resolved to attain Buddhahood. Everyone is certain to attain salvation sooner or later. Some passages in Nagarjuna's works foreshadow another doctrine which is but a logical consequence of the Buddha as Compassion and Wisdom (karma and prajna) who has vowed to save *all* beings. One can save oneself by vigorous spiritual training (dhyana, etc.) and by ethical discipline, but this is a difficult way (nangyo in Japanese) which may take one ages to develop into a Buddha. This is self-salvation (jiriki) by one's own power. There is also another way, the easy way (igyo), which consists in becoming convinced of one's own moral imperfection and ignorance and having faith in the absolute power of Amitabha Buddha as the Saviour. Anyone of any country, time or culture, with any kind of knowledge or at any stage of moral development, will be redeemed if he sincerely believes in Amitabha's power and will to save all. When Amitabha becomes a man's object of faith, the former

absorbs the latter into his own infinite boundless compassion. The man of faith is led to final enlightenment and liberation by Amitabha. This is salvation through the Saviour by his power (tariki). This is simply a development of the bodhisattva doctrine of Mahayana and the conception of the Buddha as an eternal Wisdom-Being found even in the Pali Nikayas; and it is not even a late development, for Amitabha scriptures existed before 150 A.D. Nagarjuna, China and the Far East believe, was the first to describe faith in Amitabha as the *igyo* (easy way) to salvation.

SELECTIONS

RATNAVALI

I

1. When Dharma is properly practised, it first leads to happiness and prosperity (abhyudaya) and then gradually to salvation, *i.e.*, liberation (naihsreyasa= moksha). The practice of Dharma is summarised as faith (sraddha) and insight (prajna).

2. Because of faith one devoutly follows Dharma and because of insight one knows truly. Of these insight is the main thing, faith is preliminary to it.

3. He who does not transgress Dharma out of attachment, hate, fear or delusion, is a possessor of faith. Such a man is most fit for the supreme good.

4. The wise man is he who always after properly examining all action—mental, verbal and physical—does only that which is conducive to the welfare of himself and others.

5. The great path of the true Dharma is clear : it is characterised by charity, sila (morality) and kshama (patience, tolerance). He who abandons this and resorts to penance only enters deeper into samsara (birth-and-death circle, flux, the phenomenal world), because penance which is nothing but

the practice of rigorous austerity and asceticism does not make one cease to hate others and do good to them.

6. All sorrow and unhappiness here or in after-life arise from performance of bad and inauspicious action, while all happiness and pleasure arise from good and auspicious action (kusala and subha karma).

7. So Dharma is twofold : disengagement (nivrtti) from all bad and inauspicious action and engagement (pravrtti) in good and auspicious action—in thought, word and deed.

8. By this, you escape hell and birth as a ghost or a beast, and attain not only rebirth among men and gods but also happiness, glory and royalty.

9. By appropriate dhyana, etc., one obtains the happiness of Brahma, etc. This is the summary of Dharma as far as it is concerned with happiness and prosperity.

10. Dharma in so far as it is concerned with liberation is a subtle and profound philosophy, and the conquerors of passion (Jinas) have said that it terrifies the foolish.

11. "I am not, I am not going to be, there is nothing which is mine and nothing is going to be mine"—such teaching is frightening to the foolish, but for the wise it removes fear.

12. The Buddha who teaches solely for the good of the

people has stated that they (*i.e.*, all persons) are the offspring of ahamkara (postulation of ego or ego) and are involved in mamakara (the sense of 'mine', *i.e.*, of possession).

13. From the standpoint of absolute truth (paramartha), "I am and there is something which is mine" —this is false (mithya), because both these do not follow from right knowledge of things as they are (yathabhutaparijnana).

14. The aggregates (skandhas) which make up the individual are produced from the ego, which in fact is not real. How can something real sprout up from a seed which is not real ?

15. When the aggregates are thus seen to be not real, ego is destroyed; when ego is gone there is again no possibility of the production of aggregates.

16. As long as there is a grasping (graha) of aggregates, so long there is ego. When there is ego there is again karma, and from this follows rebirth.

17. This circle of *samsara*, which has no beginning, middle and end, whirls round with its three successions (ahamkara, karma and birth) which mutually cause one another. It is like the circle of the whirling firebrand (alatamandala).

18. It is impossible to demonstrate that ego is produced either by itself or by another, or both by itself and another; it is also impossible to demonstrate that it is produced at any time—in the past, present or

future. When this is understood, ego ceases to be, and then there is karma and lastly rebirth.

19. Seeing thus the springing forth of cause and effect (hetuphalotpada) as well as their disintegration, one cannot maintain in truth either nihilism—denial of all existence—"Is not" view (nastita) or realism, assertion of all existence as real—"Is" view (astita) concerning the world.

20. This Truth removes all sorrow. But when a man who cannot ascertain its veracity hears this, because of his ignorance he trembles and fears 'the abode of the fearless' (Nirvana).

21. If you do not fear when it is said that all this will not exist in Nirvana, then why do you fear when it is said that here everything is non-existent ?

22. If liberation (moksha) in which there is no self (atman) and aggregates is liked by you, then why do you dislike the removal of atman and aggregates here itself ?

23. While Nirvana is not non-existence, how can it be existence ? The end of the consideration of existence and non-existence (bhavabhavaparamarsa-kshaya) is Nirvana.

24. The nihilistic view, to put it briefly, denies that karma has any effect. This is considered to be a wrong view, which is sinful and dangerous (leads to an evil fate).

25. The realistic view, to put it briefly, asserts that

karma has its effects. It is considered to be the right view, which is meritorious and leads one to a good fate (sugati).

26. When knowledge extinguishes nihilism and realism, there is a transcendence (vyatikrama) of virtue and vice, merit and demerit (punya-papa). This is liberation (moksha) from evil as well as good fate.

27. Seeing that all origination is caused, one goes beyond nihilism (*i.e.*, rejects it); and seeing that what is originated is destroyed along with what caused it, one does not maintain realism.

28. A cause, whether originated before the effect or along with it, is in truth not a cause. In fact, the idea of origination (utpatti) is not coherent from both the absolute and conventional points of view.

29. This being the case, this other also is the case; or if this exists or occurs, this other also exists or occurs (Asmin sati idam bhavati). For example: When there is a long thing (or when there is length), there is also a short thing (or there is shortness); when there is a lamp, there is light. If there is no 'long', 'short' does not exist by itself naturally; and if there is no lamp, light is impossible.

30. A man seeing thus the springing forth of cause and effect cannot maintain nihilism, especially when he admits that the world as it is is phenomenal (prapanca).

31. When he further understands that cessation is also phenomenal, because it is of such a nature, he can-

not maintain realism also. Therefore, not clinging to both (*i.e.*, denying both the views, advaya nisritah), he is liberated.

32. A form seen from afar is seen clearly by those nearby. But if a mirage were water, why is it not seen as water by those nearby ?

33. This world is not seen by those who are close to it as it is seen by those who are away from it. Its appearance to those involved in it differs from its appearance to those who are discriminating and aloof from it. So, it is like a mirage devoid of any specific sign (nimitta).

34. A mirage appears like water, but it is not water, nor is it in fact something else. Similarly, the aggregates appear like atman, but they are not atman, nor are they in fact something else.

35. Whoever seeing a mirage from afar thinks it is water, goes near it and then finds there is no water, is a fool, because he could not discern a mirage as such as soon as he saw one.

36. The world is like a mirage; to conceive it either nihilistically or realistically is a delusion. If one is deluded, one is not liberated.

37. The nihilist (nastika) meets with evil fate, while good fate awaits the realist (astika). The one who does not cling to both these views (advaya nisritah) is liberated, because of right knowledge of things as they are (yathabhutaparijnanan).

38. Some are unwilling to assess realism and nihilism on the basis of the right knowledge of things as they are. On account of their delusion, they come to hold that Nirvana is nihility. Why do they not come to hold that it is reality ?

39. If it is objected that by denying that Nirvana is existence, its nihility is in truth implicitly admitted, it may be replied that by denying that Nirvana is non-existence, its reality is in truth implicitly admitted.

40. In this philosophy there is no thesis, no ethical theory and no mind, because it is based on enlightenment (bodhi). Those whose meaning is really nothingness (nastikatva)—how can they be considered as nihilists ?

41. Enquire from any philosopher or common man whether he asserts a transcendence (vyatikrama) of "is" and "is not"—existence and non-existence. (You will find he does not.)

42. Therefore, know that the profound doctrine of the transcendence of "is" and "is not", being unique, is the gift of Dharma, and is the essence (gist) of the teaching of the Buddhas.

43. The world does not cease to be, does not come to be, nor does it endure for a moment. It is, therefore, of a nature which is not existence in time—past, present or future. How can it be then something real ?

44. In reality both the world and Nirvana have no

temporal existence. So, what in truth is the difference between these two ?

45. Since there is no duration (sthiti), there is really neither origination nor cessation. How can then anything really originate, endure and cease to be ?

46. If there is a perpetual flux, how can then existence be not momentary ? If, however, there is no flux, how can then becoming be real ?

47. Everything is momentary because it is disintegrating either partially or totally (Or, because everything is undergoing change through its partial or total decay or loss). But no difference is seen in either case. So, both are illogical.

48. If things are momentary, how can anything be the same old thing ? On the other hand, if they are not momentary but enduring, how can anything be even then the same old thing ?

49. If a moment has an end, let its beginning and middle also be postulated. In this way a moment being triadic, the world does not have the duration of even a single moment. (This means : Each moment is seen to be having sub-moments. Moments being composite, they cannot be real, and so nothing can be momentary.)

50. Each of the three components of a moment (i.e., beginning, middle and end) also may be conceived as having similarly three further components. And being the beginning, middle and end is neither a self-existent nor a produced condition. (This

means : neither sub-moments nor moments exist.)

51. There is no entity which is a unity or 'one', because every entity has many aspects or sides, for there is nothing without having any aspect or side. Without 'one' or unity, there is no 'many' or plurality: without reality, there is no nihility.

52. The nihility of reality is possible either through destruction or contradiction. But if existence is impossible, how can there be destruction or contradiction ?

53. Therefore, in reality, attainment of Nirvana does not imply the end of the world. That is why when asked whether the world has an end, the Buddha remained silent.

54. The seers of Truth, the fully enlightened ones, declared that this Dharma concerned with *naihsreyasa* is profound, that it does not hold any doctrine and that it is 'independent' (analaya, *i.e.*, it has no prop and also does not provide any).

55. People who depend on props, who have not gone beyond nihilism and realism, are afraid of this Dharma which is independent. They are unwise and are ruined.

56. When the plantain tree with all its parts is cut asunder, it is nothing; so is the individual with all his constituents when cut asunder. (This means : neither of them has any substantial core.)

57. The Jinas (conquerors of passion) have declared

that all dharmas (elements of existence) are anatman (not atman). (This means they lack substantiality, *i.e.*, any permanent identical reality). They have also established that the six dhatus (ultimate constituents of existence comprising matter and spirit : the five elements—ether, air, fire, water and earth—and consciousness) have no reality.

58. Neither atman nor anatman (not-atman) is demonstrated from the standpoint of absolute truth. The great Muni asked us not to hold views based on atman and anatman.

59. The Muni did not say that whatever is seen, heard, etc., is true or that it is false. From a position arises a counterposition, and neither of them is real.

60. Thus, really this world is beyond truth and falsity (satyanrta-atita); so, in fact, neither its existence nor its non-existence is established.

61. As such, how could the Omniscient Buddha say about this indeterminate world that it has an end or no end, that it is both or not both ?

62. The profundity of Dharma lies in this : it is a mystery to the worldling. The nectar (essence) of the teaching of the Buddhas is that the world is like an illusion (mayopamatvam lokasya).

63. Just as the birth and the end of a phantom elephant are seen, although they do not really occur; even so a beginning and an end of this illusion-like world

may appear, but in reality they are not.

64. A phantom elephant comes from nowhere and goes nowhere : it is only a mental delusion (cittamohanamatra). So it does not exist or abide.

65. Similarly, the illusion-like world comes from nowhere and will go nowhere: it is only a mental delusion. So it does not exist or abide.

66. Except in common usage (vyavaharatah), what really is this world which has no temporal existence and yet which exists does not exist and is also otherwise ?

67. Therefore, and for no other reason, the Buddha left the status of the world undeclared and inexpressible (avyakrta)—indefinable in any one of these ways : as having an end, no end, as both and as not both.

II

1. If this Dharma is not properly understood, ahamkara continues, and from that karma, good and bad, and from the latter rebirths, good and bad, follow.

2. Therefore, as long as Dharma, destroyer of ego, is not assimilated, so long heed with respect the Dharma consisting of charity, sila and kshama.

3. This Dharma (relating to naihsreyasa) ill-understood will destroy the unwise, for then they will

sink into the mire of nihilism.

4. Others, fools in fact but who consider themselves to be pandits, and who from a terrible misunderstanding of it attack it, ruin themselves thereby, and fall head down into Avici (the worst hell).

5. Therefore, for attaining all your ends, abandon attacks on it as well as the nihilistic view and strive for right knowledge.

6. By seeing that everything is devoid of any real essence (naihsvabhavya), the craving to obtain happiness as well as the craving to be rid of unhappiness will cease. For those who see thus, there is liberation (mukti).

7. If it is asked, who sees thus ?, it is replied, according to common usage, that it is the mind (citta). But without mental states there is no mind, nor does it coexist along with them, for then it would be superfluous.

8. He who considers the world thus as meaningless and false (vyartha), because that is what it is, is without any fixation (niraspada). Having then nothing to fix him, he is emancipated (nirvati, also lit. extinguished, dissolved) as fire is when it has no fuel to feed upon.

9. A Bodhisattva also has perceived this truth; so his perfect enlightenment is assured. But out of sheer compassion, he continues to be reborn till final emancipation, because he chooses to do so.

10. In Mahayana the Tathagatas have defined the nature of a Bodhisattva's sambhara—magnitude (or wealth) of merit (punya) and saving knowledge (jnana). But the fools and the inimical abuse it.

11. Like ether (kham) the Buddha has inconceivable qualities. So he is described as such in Mahayana. Let this—his majesty—be conceded.

12. Mahayana has every merit; the absolute good of others alone is dear to it, because it does not take into consideration what is good for oneself. Whoever hates it is damned.

13. Even a man of faith may intensely dislike Mahayana if it is misunderstood by him; another may hate it out of anger. Even the former, it is said, will be damned; need anything be said about the man of hate ?

14. Everything in Mahayana proceeds from compassion (karuna) and is purified by saving knowledge. Who in his senses, would abuse it ?

15. With the gracious help of Mahayana and by practising what it teaches, supreme enlightenment is attained, and before that all happiness.

16. What will be beneficial in future must be done even if it is painful at present. If so, how much more obligatory is it to do what is conducive to the happiness and well-being of oneself and others now and in future also ? Such is the eternal Dharma.

17. (a) By charity (dana) and sila the good of others is realised; (b) by patience (kshanti) and vigour (virya) one's own good is realised; and (c) meditation (dhyana) and insight (prajna) lead to liberation (moksha). This is the summary of the content of Mahayana.

18. The Dharma especially for the householder is said to be consisting of charity, sila, kshama and truth; its essence is pity (krpagarbhah). Let it be appropriated firmly.

III

1. O King ! one, who performs only such actions which are motivated by Dharma, are based on it and culminate in it, will not come to grief either in this world or in the other.

2. From Dharma arise fame, happiness and fearlessness now, and at the time of death, as well as great happiness in the other world. So be always devoted to it.

3. Dharma alone is the supreme policy (niti), for by Dharma are people made happy and when people are happy a king is not deceived either here or in the other world.

4. A policy based on Adharma (anti-dharma) displeases people, and by displeasing people a king cannot rejoice here or in the other world.

5. How is it that by some men of evil inclination an unfortunate body of knowledge (anarthavidya =lit. science of ill-fare), extremely pernicious, deceitful, difficult and ill-fated, has been exalted as the science of polity (arthavidya=lit. science of welfare) ?

6. How can a man who habitually and on principle deceives others really make and implement policy ? Such a man deceives only himself for thousands of births.

7. If you wish to displease your enemy, abandon all your vices and defects and cultivate virtues and acquire merit. Thus will follow your own welfare and your enemy's displeasure.

8. Practise charity, kind speech and conduct beneficial to others, and thereby you will serve the world as well as Dharma (loka-and dharma-sangraha).

9. Just as truth on the part of rulers engenders public confidence in them, even so untruth on their part will lead to its loss.

10. In fact, Truth is not just what is consistent and uncontradicted or what is born of good intentions but what is absolutely good for others (paraikantahitam satyam). What is not so is untruth, for it is not good for others.

11. A single brilliant act of liberality on the part of kings covers up their faults, whereas their miserliness destroys all their virtues.

12. From self-control (upasama) arises seriousness of purpose, from the latter dignity, and from that authority. So develop self-control.

13. A king who is wise becomes resolute, independent of others and steadfast, and cannot be deceived by others. So attempt to become wise.

14. Like Dharma with its four-fold blessing, a ruler blessed with these four, i.e., truth, liberality, self-control and wisdom, will be praised by gods and men,

15. If a king sits always in council with advisers, who are restrained in speech, unblemished and purified by insight (prajna) and compassion (karuna), prajna (insight) and Dharma will increase.

16. Those who give salutary advice are scarce, scarcer are those who listen to it, and still more scarce are those who do at once what is salutary.

17. Therefore, knowing what is salutary, do it at once, even if it is not to your liking. A knowing person would drink for his health a medicine however bitter it might be.

18. Moved by the constant thought of the impermanence of life, health and kingship, you will resort to Dharma as the only refuge.

19. If your government is for the sake of Dharma and not for the sake of fame or enjoyment, then it is indeed very fruitful and fortunate; but if otherwise, it is unfortunate.

20. O king, in this world generally things are mutually

contradictory (they devour each other). Yet listen, how kingship and Dharma can be reconciled.

21. Let the men who daily look after your affairs be carefully chosen persons, ripe in wisdom, born in noble families, and who are versed in law and afraid of sin.

22. Even if they justly ordain punishment, imprisonment and chastisement for the guilty, moved always by compassion be merciful towards the latter.

23. Solely for the welfare of all beings, always by compassion, you must subdue the will of even the worst sinners.

24. Violent and cruel men and the worst sinners must specially be pitied. These wretched men who have wrought their self-destruction really deserve the pity of great souls.

25. Either daily or at least once in five days set free the prisoners who have become weak; set free others also as and when they deserve; but let no one be imprisoned for life.

26. If you think of not setting free some, it means you are ill-disposed towards them. From such ill-disposition sin is constantly accumulated.

27. Till prisoners are discharged, let them have a happy prison life : let them be given proper food, drink and clothes, and facilities like baths, barbers and medical treatment.

28. As in the case of unworthy sons, punishment must be meted out with compassion and with the motive of reforming them, and not with hatred or with a desire to make extortions from them.

29. Even in the case of very bad criminals and murderers, after proper enquiry and review of their cases, expel them from your territory without injuring or killing them.

30. Through the eyes of your spies, watch yourself all that goes on in your kingdom. Always be wary and thoughtful, and do what is righteous.

31. Always honour the virtuous generously with gifts, marks of esteem and favours, and also bestow upon the rest what they deserve according to usage.

32. Let the blind, sick, crippled, wretched, succourless and indigent get food and drink equally (samyena, *i.e.*, like others) and freely.

33. A liberal and virtuous king who is also glorious and majestic becomes endearing to his people, like a sweetmeat of sugars made pungent with cardamom and pepper.

34. If you follow this policy, it will not be the law of the fish (matsyanyaya), but on the contrary your rule will be just. Thus there will be no injustice or unrighteousness, but only Dharma.

35. But if you find that because of the incompatibility of the world, to rule in accordance with Dharma is difficult, then it is appropriate that you are impelled to achievement in a different direction—the glory of Dharma.

MADHYAMIKA SASTRA

1. The Buddhas taught Dharma relying on two truths: worldly conventional truth and absolute truth.

2. Those who do not know the distinction between these two truths do not know the profound truth of Buddhism (buddhasasana).

3. Without relying on the empirical, the absolute is not taught. Without arriving at the absolute, Nirvana is not attained.

4. The Jinas (conquerers of passion) have declared that Sunyata (Emptiness) is the exit of all views; as for those who consider Sunyata itself as a view, they are pronounced to be impossible.

5. Out of sympathy (anukampa), Gautama taught the true Dharma to destroy all views. I bow to him.

6. If two things cannot be conceived either as identical or different from each other, or if two things

are not intelligible, either together or separately, neither of those two is established as real.

7. If the consumed fuel is the consuming fire, agent and action would be identical; but if fire is different from fuel, it must come into existence even without fuel.

8. The self is not the mental states which originate and cease; how can that which is experienced be what experiences ?

9. On the other hand, the self different from the mental states is not established, because if it is different, it would be apprehended apart from them: but it is not so apprehended.

10. The relation between the self and the mental states has been interpreted by means of the fire-fuel relation. Everything including things like pot, cloth, etc., may be similarly interpreted.

11. Similarly, the individual and his feelings are not established either together or separately. Like this, no entity is proved to exist either together or separately.

12. Whatever originates depending upon another is not that 'another', nor is it different from the latter. Thus it is not annulled and is not also eternal.

13. An entity which is not dependently originated does not exist. Therefore, a non-empty (asunya) entity does not exist.

14. Whatever dependently originates is by its own-being (svabhava) quiet (santa). So what is originating as well as origination are quiet.

15. Whatever of which Sunyata is valid is valid. Whatever of which it is not valid is not valid. (This means: Whatever is, is compatible with Emptiness.)

16. A non-empty effect does not either arise or perish; thus the non-empty would be unborn and unceasing.

17. How can the empty originate and cease to be ? But it follows that the empty is unceasing and unoriginated.

18. Beings (bhavas) have no own-being because they are seen to be other-beings. There is no being without own-being, hence the Sunyata of beings.

19. If own-being does not exist, whose could be other-being ? If own-being exists, whose could be other-being ?

20. If there were something non-empty, there might be something empty. But there is nothing non-empty; so how could there be anything empty ?

21. What is dependent origination—that we call Sunyata; it is a conception (prajnapti) imposed (or appropriated). It alone is the Middle Path.

22. Sunyata wrongly apprehended destroys the dull-witted, even as a snake carelessly caught or magic ill-performed.

23. Origination, duration and cessation (of anything) are not established as real; so there is nothing conditioned (samskrta). When the conditioned is not established, how can the unconditioned be established ?

24. It is explained (analogically) that origination, duration and cessation are like an illusion, a dream and a fairy city.

25. As is the own-being of the Tathagata so is the own-being of this world. The Tathagata has no own-being and this world also has no own-being.

26. It is not conceivable that Bhagavan (the Buddha) exists after his final cessation, or that he does not exist; nor is it conceivable that he exists as well as does not exist or that neither is the case.

27. Even when he was alive, it is not conceivable that Bhagavan existed or did not exist; nor are the other two alternatives possible.

28. Those who conceptualise the Buddha who is beyond conceptualisation (prapancatita) and is imperishable (avyaya) are destroyed by doing so. All such people do not see the Tathagata.

29. The Buddhas have declared that the self exists; they have also taught that there is no self. They have indeed taught neither the existence nor the non-existence, nor something else, of the self.

30. It is not established that I existed in the past, because this one is not the very same one who existed in previous lives.

31. It is not established that I did not exist in the past, because this one is not different from the one who existed in previous lives.

32. As this series of skandhas (i.e., the present individual) proceeds (from former series, i.e., the previous individual) like the light-rays of a lamp, it is not appropriate to say that it is either finite or infinite.

33. The self is not something other than the mental states, nor is it just the collection or totality of them; there is no self without them. Also, the self is not non-existent. This is the conclusion.

34. The seer and seeing do not exist either apart from each other or not apart from each other; when the seer is non-existent, where are the seen and seeing?

35. Because the seem and seeing do not exist, there is no consciousness (vijnana) of the four types. So, how can there be mental states, etc. ?

36. All the objects of senses—in fact, all the constituents of existence—appear like fairy cities, and resemble a mirage or a dream.

37. In these which are like a phantom man or a reflection, how can there be any purity or impurity (auspicious or inauspicious) ?

38. All the objects of senses, all the constituents of existence, and the six types of objects of attachment, hatred and delusion are just a conceptual construction (vikalpa).

39. He who sees dependent origination sees suffering, its origination, its cessation and the path to the latter.

40. When suffering, its origination and its cessation are not real (because they have no own-being and are empty), through cessation of suffering, what will the path lead to ?

41. Nirvana of conditioned things (samskaras, complexes) is anyhow impossible; nor is Nirvana of a living being (sattva) anyhow possible.

42. If the mental states constitute bondage, then he who has them is not bound; and he who does not have them is also not bound. Then in what condition is he bound ?

43. He who is bound is not liberated and he who is not bound also is not liberated. If it is the bound who is being liberated, then bondage and liberation would become simultaneous.

44. That which is not abandoned, not reached, not annihilated, not eternal, not ever interrupted and not created—is said to be Nirvana.

45. "Without the mind and its modes I will be free; I will then attain Nirvana"—those who grasp such a notion grasp firmly the mind and its modes.

46. Where there is no putting on (*i.e.*, acquisition) of Nirvana and no removal (or annulment) or samsara, there samsara and Nirvana are conceptually constructed.

47. There is not the slightest distinction between samsara and Nirvana or between Nirvana and samsara.

48. That which is the limit of Nirvana is also the limit of samsara; there is not even the subtlest difference between the two.

49. That which is caused and conditioned is samsara; the same is taught to be Nirvana when considered as not caused and not conditioned.

50. When what is within the reach of the mind (citta) ceases, what can be spoken of ceases : The reality of the elements of existence (dharmata), unborn and unceasing, is like Nirvana.